

A FOUNDATION FOR

ART

EDUCATION

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To my mother,  
for her innate vision

## Preface

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IN the general education of children the arts offer unique potentialities for creative growth and development. The purpose of this book is to lay a foundation for examining the fundamental problems in art education. It centers on creative experience and the education of children. Seeking to dispel some of the current ambiguities and confusions, it suggests a synthesis with related fields to better our understanding of the process of artistic action.

The meaning of experience in the arts, although primarily the concern of art educators, is of vital significance to all others contributing to the general education of children. Experience in the arts is inseparable from creative perception and insight, the cornerstone of a sound general education program. Therefore, although this book is addressed specifically to those whose business it is to help children experience the arts—prospective art teachers and elementary school teachers, and teachers in service—the material should interest all those who recognize the importance of creative involvement in the process of education.

Art education as we know it today began to develop in America about half a century ago. Since that time, it has modified both its purposes and its forms. It began with an emphasis on the precise execution of "object drawings," later changed to an aesthetic orientation based on nineteenth-century absolutes of beauty, and then shifted to "free expression." Currently our interest is in aesthetic behavior as a special quality of human be-

havior in general, and particularly as it affects the development of personality.

The graphic and plastic arts have contributed to this interest, as has contemporary education with its concern for social and psychological growth. In recent years, men like Herbert Read, Henry Schaefer-Simmern, and Viktor Lowenfeld have done significant work in this field. Their emphasis on the *meaning of aesthetic behavior* in the education of children has indicated directions for further study.

We still need, however, a more basic understanding of experience in the arts. Such an understanding must incorporate current concepts from psychology, sociology, anthropology, cultural history, philosophy, and the arts. Art education cannot limit attention to the artistic product alone but must view the arts as a process of human action and behavioral development. Furthermore, the problems of teaching through the arts need to be examined within the context of the school curriculum in the American public schools.

To carry out this task, obvious risks were assumed by drawing freely, though selectively, on several relevant fields of specialized research. The full scope of relationships between these fields and the teaching of art is probably beyond the ken of any single individual. But, to teach well, one needs to be as aware as he can become of the many ramifications of his task. The risks assumed in such an undertaking are compensated by the stimulation to everlasting refinement.

The development of this book presented special difficulties. To bring together and synthesize divergent streams of thought, it needed to do more than report the significant contributions of each field. It needed to relate varying concepts as they bear upon education through experience in the arts. This necessity has dictated the structure of the book. It is cumulative. Each chapter highlights a particular phase of the subject; each chapter also is built upon and advances the discussion of the previous ones. This has been done with the hope of overcoming the danger of

segmenting what really must be brought together. The result, it is hoped, is a form which is organic and in character with the theme.

This volume consists of three parts. The first indicates the sources and development of current thought in the field of art education in order to identify some of the basic teaching problems. The second relates the basic problems in art education to significant concepts about human behavior growing out of research in other fields. It deals with the values that people derive, through processes of creative experience. In the third part, findings from the related fields of study are brought together in the form of a new frame of reference for art education. Its implications are interpreted in terms of the operational problems of art education in the elementary and secondary schools. The synthesis of these findings forms a foundation for art education.

The reader may wonder about the absence of pictorial illustrations. To be sure, art products are highly significant. Too often, however, interest in such products all but obliterates the necessary attention to the process of formation. The absence of pictorial illustrations should not imply their lack of value. It does, however, underscore the need to deal with behavior which cannot often be pictorialized on the pages of a book.

I find it difficult to express adequately my gratitude to Professor Ross L. Mooney of The Ohio State University whose sensitivity and interest in the potentialities of creative experience in the arts was equaled only by his continuous and generous help and encouragement. I also owe thanks to these friends and colleagues from The Ohio State University for their valuable suggestions: Professors Arthur W. Foshay, Jerome J. Hausman, Everett J. Kircher, Florence G. Robbins, Melvin Seeman, David Spitz, and Laura Zirbes. I am also grateful for valuable criticism from Jack Bookbinder of the Philadelphia Public Schools, Professor Lester Dix of Brooklyn College, Professor H. Harry Giles of New York University's Center for Human Relations Studies, Professor Leland Jacobs of Teachers College, Columbia University, Helen

McLauchlin of the Child Development Bureau of the University of the State of New York, and Professor Betsy Jane Welling of Wayne University.

I am indebted to my son for many of the hours devoted to this manuscript that rightfully belonged to him. To my wife I am unable to convey the appreciation that is due for her stimulating help and painstaking labors that are evident throughout the pages of the book.

MANUEL BARKAN

Columbus, Ohio  
January, 1955

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## PART ONE

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*Influences, Development, and Problems*

## Art Education Today

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THIS book deals with some essential considerations for developing effective teaching in art education. Although it does not attempt to propose a teaching method, the analysis it offers has implications for teaching procedures. Novel methods, unless based upon knowledge about behavior, hold little promise and can only lead to confusion and ambiguity. The purpose of the book is to demonstrate how knowledge about the various elements in a teaching situation can be applied in answering the basic questions concerning education through the arts.

Education through the arts is the responsibility of many. Teachers with a wide variety of training and backgrounds are teaching the arts at the different educational levels. For example, in the elementary schools, art is taught, for the most part, by general classroom teachers. At the secondary school level, the teaching of art is the exclusive job of teachers who are primarily trained in the special field of the visual arts. In the area of adult education, there are teachers who know the arts; many of these, however, are not trained in teaching processes.

Although general classroom teachers and special art teachers are attentive to many aspects of the teaching process, they often focus on what appear to be different questions and different problems. Many classroom teachers feel a need to know more about helping children to manage and manipulate art materials. This

occurs, in part, as an outgrowth of the limitations of their own experience with the arts. Many art teachers seem to direct major attention to the organization and sequence of activities in the arts. Some classroom teachers and art teachers conscientiously seek to relate art products to the experience of children.

Although these concerns differ in many respects, there is a common core from which they arise. They are related to each other, and they cannot be viewed or answered independently. The best teaching in art education, at all levels, grows out of insight into the *relationships* among such separate questions.

### *Recent Growth of Art Education*

In recent years, art education in American schools has been turning its attention toward the general education of children and youth. In doing so, it has laid particular claim to the education of all children by affirming the belief that experience in the arts can make a unique contribution to creative democratic living. Many art educators contend that artistic experience encourages sensitive and integrated personality development.

Art in general education is becoming less a body of subject matter composed of certain specific skills, and more a way of working and a way of seeing. It provides an essential avenue for growth. Individuals, as they work in the arts, react to stimuli in their environment by composing interpretive visual forms. This process of reaction and composition involves the play of sensitive judgment. The thrill of expanding sensitivity becomes the source of wholesome satisfaction.

Unless an individual has ample opportunity to make personal judgments, discover his own meanings, and create harmonious relationships in his own way, he never achieves satisfaction. His tension mounts, he grows less secure, and he loses his capacity to make sound judgments. He loses sight of the goals that can provide deep satisfaction for himself as a person and becomes incapable of the informed participation that a democratic com-

munity demands. The growing emphasis in art education on developing mature and sensitive individuals seeks to prepare children for adult democratic action.

Art materials and the activities in which they are used have unmatched potentiality for individual participation at all age levels. The individual finds these materials in an unstructured state. Paint, crayon, chalk, paper, clay, and the multitude of other three-dimensional materials are separate and unorganized entities *until a person begins to put them together*. While engaged in the activity of organizing these materials into a painting or piece of sculpture, the person is at once the composer and his own audience. He chooses colors and forms in order to compose. When he looks at his painting, he is the audience for his own composition. Judgment accompanies every choice he makes. The process is reciprocal, involving the interplay of composing (acting) and judging (evaluating). This process is the essence of all sensitive and informed participation, because the individual carries the evaluative responsibility for all his actions. As such, it is the heart of democratic living.

The contribution of art education to the development of informed participation and *meaningful satisfaction* has received increasing attention in the education of children. Many schools are seeking to provide wholesome opportunities in the arts. The presence of an effective art program is becoming one sign of a good school; the absence of such is becoming a mark of deficiency.

Although the values of art education are being recognized and accepted, the teaching of art has not developed equally at all educational levels. There has been greater readiness to incorporate the arts in elementary school programs. Marked growth in art education is particularly evident in *elementary schools where progress has been made in general educational improvement*.

The development of art education in the secondary schools has been slower, but here too there is evidence of progress. The *value of experience in the arts* is winning recognition in various programs of adult education. Many universities are assuming an

obligation to provide opportunities in the arts for their students; community agencies are recognizing the desirability of adult participation in the arts.

Through such recognition, art education is emerging as an important area of educational experience. The changing status of art education is making teachers aware of new responsibilities. General classroom teachers and art teachers are striving to understand the nature of their changing role. The value of technical training in the manipulation of art media is being understood realistically; children are taught how to work in the arts in order to derive the human values from the experience. Teachers are becoming less concerned with educating for a particular kind of artistic excellence and more concerned with developing sensitivity to the meaning of experience in the arts. Art education is becoming "less a body of subject matter than a developmental activity."<sup>1</sup>

As a result, the art experiences of children and youth are becoming a more significant element in their daily lives. Rather than learning some fragmentary aspects of art processes, they are helped to use the arts as means of both communion and communication. As communion, the arts are a way of knowing and a means for rediscovering the commonplace; as communication, they are a personal language and medium of expression. A child's insight into an idea to be expressed and his ability to manage an art medium to communicate this idea are as intimately related in the educational process as they are in life itself. The arts come to life as visual language forms to express his ideas and feelings in meaningful ways.

The living realization of meaningful experience in the arts occurs at all age levels. A group of fifth-grade children in one school were building huge sculptures of animals for a stock show. Their school was located near the stockyards in their community. In their own way, they were going to participate in the annual

<sup>1</sup> "As an Art Teacher I Believe That . . ." *Art Education, The Journal of the National Art Education Association*, II, No. 2 (March-April, 1949).

stock show. They needed animals and so looked for ways to make them. They wanted big animals, and they even hoped to make movable parts for some of the bodies.

With the help of their teacher, they surveyed the available and promising materials. The school custodian helped in building frames with scrap wood and light-weight chicken wire. The children developed the shapes of the bodies on the frames with strips of newspaper and flour paste. Their animals were beautiful. They even invented a way to make milk pour from the udder of their prize cow.

Through their artistic constructions, the children were able to nourish and expand their keen interests. They did far more than build mere illustrations of what they saw; their artistic activity was meaningful because it led them to a fresh, new visual world of stock animals. They both shared and contributed to the life in their community. The arts were the vibrant vehicles for their personal interaction with the life around them. Through experience in the arts, they were learning to discover and compose expressive, living ideas.

All school situations are rich with potentialities for such meaningful experience through the arts. In one junior high school, a seventh-grade class was studying high-lights of our American heritage. While reading stories about Lincoln, the boys and girls were fascinated by the many anecdotes describing his life. They wanted to do something with the anecdotes they had collected.

One boy objected to the suggestion that they make a class book. "Then we will have only one copy," said he, "and only one person could read it. Why can't we print a book?" They consulted the art teacher and the industrial art teacher to work out a plan. The art teacher offered to help them design the layout of the book and prepare the illustrations. The industrial art teacher would help them in setting the type.

They worked on this project for more than two months. They came to school early and devoted all their spare time to the many



different and complex tasks involved. A whole cluster of related learnings were gained about book design, lettering, and pictorial illustration. The book was a real achievement, and they were proud to distribute the copies. This experience in the arts served them well in many ways. They used the expressive forms of the arts to give concrete shape to a meaningful idea. They learned, among other things, that the arts provide real means for boys and girls to accomplish objectives they value.

The way these children were being taught to see and understand the significance of the arts in their own personal-social lives served the highest aspirations of general education for democratic living. Such teaching is not accidental. It is the product of clear purpose translated into intelligent method. The lack of clear and sound purpose can lead only to ambiguous and confused teaching.

### *Effort To Overcome Ambiguities*

Important new insights into a teacher's role in helping children develop their creative capacities are coming to light. These insights are being fed by research with information which is enhancing our knowledge about the nature of experience in the arts. Some teachers are using this expanding knowledge to guide experimentation for the improvement of their own teaching methods. Others are simply accepting the superficialities of some new method without fully understanding its implications. Still others, unfortunately, seem unaware of changes that are in process. They adhere to interpretations of the arts and teaching procedures of an educational era that is past.

Teaching practices in art education are being improved to the degree that teachers are able to absorb information about: (1) the arts, (2) developmental characteristics of children, and (3) relevant aspects of the nature of human behavior. The major reason for the growth and improvement in the teaching of art is a result of the ability of teachers to translate their new knowledge into teaching methods.

The value of education through the arts *depends on the way an individual experiences the arts*. It depends on the way a child is taught and the situation in which he works. In a classroom, it is the teacher who sets the tone and controls the situation so that children may or may not derive value from their activity. A teacher works with a multitude of elements within a classroom. His conduct in relation to these elements determines the quality of the experience for the children.

A teacher's interpretation of the needs of children, his allocation of time for work, his selection of materials, his use of available space, his assignment of tasks, together with his general point of view regarding the arts are all critical elements over which he exercises considerable control. A teacher can choose to set rigid time limits for the completion of a particular project, or he can be sensitive to the time needs of individual children. It is the teacher who decides whether to confer with children in *determining the theme and direction for their activity in the arts*. It is the teacher's choice to be satisfied with the best efforts of individual children, or to insist on some predetermined standard which may often be unattainable by a child without loss of integrity.

The choices that teachers make in their day-to-day work with children determine the quality of the learning and the educational value of the experiences. When choices are soundly based, good learning results. When they are based on fragmentary or ambiguous reasons, the children suffer.

Through choices involving such elements as have been indicated, teachers prescribe working procedures for their children to follow. They define tasks. They organize activities. *They provide children with particular experiences*. A child's learning experience is the sum total of all the influences he encounters. It is neither any single accomplishment nor a task completed in itself.

For example, a second-grade teacher requested her pupils to "color in" the outlined drawings *she* had distributed. She assigned

this task because of the assumptions that underlie her teaching. Included were such beliefs as: second-grade children cannot draw well enough themselves; their own ideas are childish; to learn they must be given ideas; they should learn to follow directions by keeping their colors within given lines. Another second-grade teacher told the children in her class that they could make any pictures they pleased in crayon or paint after they finished all their work. They were to draw or paint quietly, because she was going to be busy helping a group of children with their reading. In contrast, a third teacher informed the children in her second-grade class that they could work in the arts at certain hours during the week. She told them that there was space at the clay table for only six children and that there were paintbrushes for only ten. The others would have to work in crayon. During each work period, however, they would be able to take turns so that all could work with the several materials. She also said that they could choose their own ideas for their work, but she would want to talk over their ideas with them.

All three teachers defined the limits of the learning experience. The first teacher prevented the children from exploring their own ideas because her actions contradicted the sound, available information about the developmental capacities of children. She created a conflict between the idea she dictated and the children's own ideas. Her authority prevailed at the expense of the ingenuity of the children. The second teacher gave the children no help and left them to their own devices. She used the arts as a convenient means to keep the children "busy" while she was performing another task.

The third teacher defined clear limits concerning available space and equipment, the need to take turns, and the responsibility of the children to report on and discuss their work. Within these limits, however, the maximum possibilities for inventive choice and positive learning were insured.

These three teachers exemplify several current ways of dealing with the human and physical elements in a teaching situation;

the action of the third teacher represents some of the fundamental changes that are in process in orientation and teaching method in the field of art education. To understand these changes, it is of utmost importance that single items belonging to a total situation be considered in relationship to each other. *The relationship among several factors in a situation affects the character of the single items themselves.*

The importance of the interplay of related factors can be illustrated by the case of a child who behaves differently among his peers and among adults. The particular situations in which he finds himself cause him to react in different ways and hence to exhibit particular characteristics. Were we to judge the behavior of this child, we would really be judging *the relationship between the child and the particular situation.*

The way relationships affect our interpretation of single aspects of a total problem can be further illustrated with the question of discipline, a common concern among most teachers. A child who is interested in a task is rarely a disciplinary problem. He becomes a disciplinary problem when he loses interest in a constructive task. To merit interest, a task needs to be within the ability range of the child; he needs to recognize its purpose. These two elements operate in relation to each other. If a task requires greater skill or experience than the child has or if he sees no purpose for doing the task, his attention wanders to the point where he becomes a disciplinary problem.

When relationships among these elements are ignored, no sound resolution is possible. Discipline is then viewed as an isolated phenomenon and is considered an opposite to freedom. A disciplinary problem can be solved constructively only in terms of the particular child—the relationships among his previous experiences, his will to participate, his capacities to deal with a specific task, and the immediate circumstances under which these elements are operating. To argue discipline versus freedom is fruitless. The analysis of previous experiences in order to arrange conditions under which individuals can be meaningfully chal-

lenced can lead to a teacher's insight into the problem. Information about behavior can then be related to the problem and sound, workable solutions produced.

The problems of teaching through the arts contain related elements which cannot be separated or placed in opposition to each other. When relationships among these elements are not recognized, ambiguity of basic meanings is encountered. Such ambiguity leads to teaching procedures that are inconsistent with articulated purposes. The result is confusing, and it impairs the sound solution of problems.

### *Confusion in Purpose Leads to Conflict in Method*

The Committee on Art Education, sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art, in announcing the theme of its 1951 conference, wrote in its *Newsletter*: "The Art of Teaching Art was chosen . . . because this is a crucial problem confronting art education today when there is so much confusion on the theory and methods of creative teaching." This is the theme for the conference "because we are concerned with trying to establish a direction both in thinking and practice."<sup>2</sup>

While teachers are creating a new art education, they still carry with them assumptions predicated on educational procedures from which they are departing. Practices in art education demonstrate many modes of understanding and many forms of teaching. Some variations are thoroughly individual and sound, because teaching is an art in itself, reflecting the individuality of a teacher and his particular group of students. Other variations stem from conflicting interpretations of the needs of people, of the value of experience in the arts, and of the ways in which people learn. When based on vague interpretations of developmental needs or on antiquated conceptions of learning, teaching fails to generate values that can come from experience in the arts.

<sup>2</sup> "Theme," *Newsletter of the Committee on Art Education*, Sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art, IV, No. 4 (December, 1950), p. 1.

Art education used to promote a certain style of taste. It used to pursue a particular sequence of problems, and it was based on a set of skills growing out of absolute principles. Art education today seeks to develop sensitivity to visual relationships. It seeks to lead individuals to an awareness of their visual experiences and to development of their capacity to communicate personal understandings through aesthetic form. It is less concerned with "principles" of aesthetic form because experimental research into the art work of children suggests that visual form grows out of self-awareness, maturity, sensitivity, and understanding.<sup>3</sup>

Although art education is developing in terms of its newly defined purposes, greater clarity is needed to develop consistent educational practice. Underlying the purposes of art education are complex relationships in human behavior. Without insight into the dynamics of these relationships it is difficult to communicate purposes and practices.

Some teachers still require "copy work" and "coloring in" lessons, although these lead children to rigid and stereotyped responses. Others teach a predetermined sequence of problems that are executed through a series of directed steps. The needs and interests of students are often ignored, although we know that, to learn well, the learner should participate in setting his own purposes and goals.

In some schools, art education means the promotion of a particular style of "modern design." Students seem to produce well-designed work, but it is in a form that is not the product of their own maturity and understanding. In terms of learning and development, "modern" designs are produced in place of academic patterned stereotypes. Such experience in the arts does not lead to meaningful sensitivity and individual development.

It is not uncommon to find conflicting practices in a single school. In one elementary school, the teacher in class A was

<sup>3</sup> Viktor Lowenfeld, *Creative and Mental Growth* (rev. ed.; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1952), pp. 8-19; Henry Schaefer-Simmern, *The Unfolding of Artistic Activity* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1948), pp. 8-29.

helping several children to build animals with clay. Another group was working on a mural showing animals in the zoo, and a third group was sitting and reading. In contrast, the teacher in class B was showing the children how to fold a piece of paper into equal sections to make a repeat design. The repeat design was not going to be used, but this "art problem" was part of the teacher's required series.

The contradiction in method between the two teachers just cited resulted from conflicting points of view. The first teacher believed that the arts were to be used by children as means of discovery and as media of expression. The second teacher assumed that certain "problems" were valuable regardless of their relationship to the purposes or needs of the children. Repeat designs were treated like academic manipulations rather than as real tasks in the solution of a problem that could appropriately involve a repeat design.

In one high school, two art teachers both taught classes in first-year art. Students whose schedules directed them to Miss X spent about half the semester doing a variety of paintings and drawings. During the last half of the semester, they were allowed to choose to continue their painting, to build sculpture, or to make simple jewelry. Students who were assigned to Miss Y began with a lesson on upper case letters. This was the first in Miss Y's series of "problems," which were to be completed in sequence at assigned dates. These teachers were using conflicting teaching methods which stemmed from fundamental differences in their basic assumptions. Miss X believed that, beyond a basic common experience in the arts, individual students should exercise a measure of choice and preference in conducting their work. Miss Y assumed that it was sound to require a specific set of problems to be completed by all the students in the same length of time.

Assumptions among teachers vary. Many, however, do not always realize the implications of their assumptions. For example, a graduate student from a well-known university distributed a

check list to determine the order of importance among several art activities. In one group he listed: figure drawing, landscape drawing, and creative drawing. By requesting that these be arranged in order of importance, he revealed his own confusion. Drawing a figure is certainly different in subject matter from drawing a landscape, but how does creative drawing differ from each of these? Surely landscapes and figures can both be drawn "creatively," although such a possibility was hardly suggested. Any teaching this student would do could be no clearer than his own understanding of the relationships of landscape, figure, and creative drawing.

### *Conflicting Methods the Result of Fruitless Opposites*

Some of the conflicting methods in art education stem from differences in point of view, many of which can be resolved through a clearer application of available knowledge. Some conflicting methods, however, are a result of the tendency to separate questions which are inseparable. The many either-or possibilities on significant questions that are currently the center of attention are symptoms of this tendency.

Discussions involve fruitless opposites such as appreciation or creative expression, skills or free expression, aesthetic or social values, fine arts or industrial arts, handicraft or machine-made objects, practical value or leisure time interest, integration or segregation, for the talented or the average. Inadequate consideration is given to relationships among the cultural, social, psychological, and aesthetic problems involved in teaching. When such questions are presented as alternative choices, their significance becomes distorted, and unproductive conflict is generated. The result is an overemphasis on method alone, and the relationship among knowledge, purpose, and method is lost.

Too much attention becomes directed to method and means. Values and purposes are enunciated in highly abstract and agreeable terms without disciplined examination of their consequences



in concrete teaching practice and in the behavior of people. Children are often taught through methods which are inconsistent with all that is known about developmental needs, learning, and the human values in experience in the arts.

### *Place of Method*

One of the underlying problems in art education, as in all areas of education, is the concept of method—the “how” of teaching. For a long time, methods were substituted for understandings. There were, and there still are, descriptions of methods for teaching certain problems in a certain subject. Many educators have learned the futility of a “method.” *Methods are important, but they are no substitute for insight into the complex relationships in any teaching situation.* All teaching is done through methods, but there is a relative difference between methods which tend to be “static” and those which tend to be “dynamic.”

The more a teacher assumes that all learners react alike, the more static are his teaching methods. A teacher who tends to work in this way is less responsive to the unique differences among individual students; he searches less for the particular needs of the group in order to understand the kind of leadership it requires. He tends to teach the same material to each class, at the same speed, in the same way.

Dynamic teaching methods grow through understanding the unique relationships between a particular teacher and a particular group of students at a particular time and place. They encompass the teacher’s knowledge of the material to be taught in relation to the ability and needs of the learners—not all learners, but the specific ones in each group. Such knowledge reveals relationships and enhances understanding leading to the constant modification and creation of methods to meet the unique circumstances in each teaching situation.

*Methods are important, but they are only tools in the process of teaching.* They are instrumental in promoting learning to the

degree that they are used as tools. *No method can be substituted for understanding.*

### *Directions Toward Basic Understanding*

Clarification of the foundations of art education can help teachers fulfill the educational potentialities of experience in the arts in the development of children and youth. There are specific qualities that need to underlie the methods and content of teaching in the arts.

Although classroom teachers and art teachers have grown increasingly aware of their obligation to the general education of children, there is no doubt that methods of teaching the arts are so divergent as to be considered contradictory. Education through the arts means many things to different people.

The foundations of art education grow from multiple sources. They encompass the aesthetic-social-psychological behavior of people. Education through experience in the arts is concerned with the development of creative perception, creative insight, and creative action. The visual arts are a language through which people express their ideas, feelings, and understandings of the things they see in their world.

Any language is a set of symbols for the ideas and images people convey through it. Because the arts are a language, they are *symbolic statements* of the things that people experience. They are visual symbols that embody human meaning through the organized relationships among the specific items within a work of visual art. These items are organized in terms of their visual position, shape, and color.

When an individual draws or paints, designs or constructs, he creates a visual art form out of his aesthetic-social-psychological insights. The choice of subject for a painting is a selective process which reveals an individual's attitudes and ideas about the subject. Similarly, when he selects subjects to design or construct, he reveals his understanding and his purposes.

This process of selection is obvious in painting because the painter conveys an emotional response to his subject. In design and construction, the functional product should not obscure this subjective process. An architect, in designing a house, is limited by the requirements of his client, but his solution depends upon *his own insights* and understandings about space for living. In the same way, the jeweler, the weaver, and the potter create functional objects *through their own interpretations of the needs of people*.

The individual who expresses his ideas through visual language forms may be a young child, a layman, or a professional artist. People at work in the arts respond to many and varied factors in their environment. These become sources of ideas to feed their imaginative capacity for organizing and constructing artistic forms. The forms symbolize the individual's insight into environmental elements.

When an individual's insights are expressed, and thereby revealed, through aesthetic form, *the insights and the form are intimately related*, because one affects the other. The strip of blue in the painting of a six-year-old that symbolizes the sky is the precise form that expresses his understanding of "sky." "Sky" is high above him, and he has no insight into great distance and horizon. The relationship between form and insight is present in the art work of all people. It is, therefore, a crucial element in any teaching process.

The art teacher who places emphasis *solely* on the color and design of an art form loses sight of this dynamic relationship in creative experience. To this extent, he fails to encourage the potential growth of the individual. Good teaching depends partially on putting such understanding to work. The teaching of art involves helping children to sharpen their understanding of the meaning of the ideas they choose to embody in their art work.

The meanings in a work of art are interpreted by people according to the prevailing culture in which they live. Every cultural environment encourages a particular responsiveness on

the part of people to the visual stimuli in the world about them. The cultural environment also shapes an individual's responsiveness to visual symbols in works of art.

As they develop, children absorb ideas from their cultural communities. Schools operate within the framework of the culture of a particular community, and schools help children to deal with the problems of their community's culture. The teaching of art is ultimately reflected in the culture of a community. The relationships between the character of the visual arts and the developmental education of children within our culture thereby become basic to a foundation for art education.

Children do not develop in a vacuum. They grow up within a culture and assimilate the variety of current cultural life patterns. To understand their educational needs is to see these children in terms of the ways of life that surround them. "The first lesson of modern sociology is that the individual cannot understand his own experience or gauge his own faith without locating himself within the trends of his epoch . . ." <sup>4</sup> Current cultural attitudes toward experience in the arts are essential elements in a foundation for art education. *Experience in the arts pertains to the lives of people, the way they act, and the kinds of things they consider valuable.*

Throughout the entire history of the human race there is evidence that virtually all peoples have participated in some aesthetic activity.<sup>5</sup> But the particular aesthetic activities of different peoples have varied widely; the aesthetic activities of many contemporary peoples differ widely from our own. Different peoples have developed different art forms; they participate in the arts in different ways. Some values of experience in the arts are general for all peoples. Some, however, are unique to the ways of life in each culture. All peoples derive satisfaction from their arts, but often for diverse cultural purposes. These purposes can be

<sup>4</sup> C. Wright Mills, *White Collar* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. xx.

<sup>5</sup> Melville Jean Herskovits, *Man and His Works* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1948), p. 378.

recognized only in terms of the ways of life of the people in a particular culture.

An important task, then, for every teacher is to study his community culture and to understand what it believes it requires. But teachers must also recognize with sensitivity the emerging needs in community life which have yet to be realized consciously. The primary function of art education, like all education, is to provide opportunities for the highest potential development of every individual. If education through art is to carry meaning in the American community, teachers are obliged to educate in terms of the apparent needs and ultimate potentialities of children and adults.

The major question for teachers to consider revolves around *the relationship between the needs of the human personality for experience in the arts and the kinds of activities our culture considers valuable*. To illustrate: although it may be good and useful for an individual to work in the arts, the value of this experience to him is impaired if the culture in which he lives considers his efforts useless. These two aspects, personal value and cultural judgment, cannot be dissociated. Through participation in the arts, an individual may derive values; but, depending upon the attitude of the culture toward the experience, the individual may or may not fulfill purposes which are significant to him. The problems of art education, therefore, *are deeply related to the personal needs of people and the attitudes of our culture toward experiences which promise to satisfy those needs*. A greater understanding of this relationship improves a teacher's ability to help children grow toward aesthetic-social-psychological maturity.

The major problem for this book, therefore, is not the proposal of a method for teaching art. It is rather to bring together some important information about human behavior, from studies in psychology, sociology, anthropology, cultural history, philosophy, and the arts, and to synthesize those findings which can help to clarify values in art education. This is admittedly a presumptuous task, but each step in that direction can contribute to the dissolu-

tion of some of the ambiguities in art education. The best teaching in art stems from maximum clarity. In this way, the teaching of art can make its full contribution to general education in the American community.

### *Summary*

Art education is departing from the teaching of a limited set of content materials. It has made great progress in program development to serve the developmental and general educational needs of children and youth.

These changes are demonstrating the value and accelerating the growth of the arts in American education. The process of change, however, has brought conflicting methods into focus. Ambiguities of purpose and method are impeding development, and they lead to inconsistency and some confusion.

The best teaching has developed through understanding the relationships between the teaching and learning processes involved in experience in the arts. Insight into these relationships is the most effective tool for the development of sound teaching methods.

Education through the arts, in assuming its position in American schools, is serving the culture which supports these schools. The impact of experience in the arts on children and youth is, therefore, related to the attitudes of the culture toward the arts.

## 2

# Attitudes Toward the Arts in Our Culture

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MANY fundamental teaching problems in art education stem from attitudes toward the arts in American culture. These attitudes permeate the minds of people. They are part of the basic equipment that children bring with them to school.

Some factors in our culture have operated to depreciate the value of the arts, but others are pointing toward the need for the kind of experience that can be derived from the arts. Factors that depreciate the arts create some serious teaching problems; the need for experience in the arts suggests the bases upon which art education can fulfill its function. It is, therefore, important to review some of the dominant American attitudes pertaining to the arts to discover their bearing on the role of the arts in education. These attitudes can be then interpreted in terms of their implications for effective teaching.

### *Evidence of Artistic Life in Our Culture*

Any effort to estimate the importance of the visual arts in American life would be strongly influenced by the point of view taken. If we focused attention on the quantities of art objects, we could arrive at one possible conclusion. If, on the other hand, we considered the degree of direct participation in the arts and the social evaluation of this participation, we would come to another

conclusion. Both aspects are important to an understanding of the problems of art education. Neither one alone can describe the characteristics of the culture which teachers should take into account.

Any survey of the American scene will produce evidence of considerable artistic activity and interest. Artistic effort is not only visible through the work of professional artists, but it is also apparent in the interest of many communities to provide opportunities for lay participation in the arts. Many of us have had contact with the organized art classes and recreational groups that function in numerous localities. Much of the present interest in community art classes received its original impetus during the depression of the nineteen thirties, when the Federal Government, through its Works Project Administration program, provided funds for work in the arts. Continued interest in artistic participation has influenced many community agencies to incorporate such opportunities into their regular programs.

Expanded interest in the arts is also evident in the mass of available reproductions of paintings. Some are good and others are mediocre; their popularity, however, is significant. The fact that newspapers sometimes offer reproductions as premiums is an indication of community interest.

Expansion in the size of most art schools and art departments in universities and colleges is equally significant. Increased numbers of students are attending such schools. An increase in the number of art teachers in the public schools has paralleled a reasonably broad expansion in art education programs.

Although holding art exhibitions continues to be the major function of museums and galleries, it is no longer their exclusive responsibility. In many communities it is not unusual to find regular exhibition programs in libraries, schools, and community centers.

Similar development can be described in the field of industrial design. More effort is being spent to improve the appearance of mass-produced objects in everyday use. We have only to



note the improved design of refrigerators, stoves, washing machines, and automobiles. At every turn, all of us come into contact with well-designed products, and many articles we buy are attractively packaged.

One cigarette company discovered that a change in the color and design of its package contributed to greater popularity of its product. A skeptic might argue that the improvement of design is merely another manifestation of high-pressure salesmanship for greater sales for greater profit. This is undoubtedly true, but the fact remains that an increasing number of manufacturers are finding it profitable to employ professional designers in order to produce the best-looking products possible. With the notable exceptions of such products as ceramics and furniture, the American people have shown a positive response to good design.

Although there are many instances to the contrary, there can be little doubt that most manufactured objects have been greatly improved in aesthetic appearance. This is a factor of artistic value. It is at once a manifestation of, and has an effect upon, popular judgment.

From the single point of view of the quantity of art objects in American life, we can indeed reach some optimistic conclusions. There is evidence of growth in both quantity and quality. Before this evidence can be properly evaluated in terms of its implications for art education, it should first be examined in relation to the predominant attitudes of people in our culture toward artistic experience. The quantity and quality of art objects need to be seen in relation to the background of American culture as it influences experience in the arts through participating activity.

Only to the degree that we understand the significance of cultural attitudes that pertain to participation in the arts can we consider the implication of these attitudes for the teaching of art. Art education must ultimately be judged by the effects it has on the things children do—their behavior and their way of life. They come to school imbued with many of the attitudes toward the arts that are characteristic of our culture.

It is not easy to become consciously aware of prevailing attitudes within our culture because most of us share many of these same attitudes personally. This task is almost like trying to look at ourselves. For this reason, it can be helpful to look briefly at some attitudes toward the arts that prevail in other cultures. Such a comparative view can provide us with a yardstick to help us see the nature of related attitudes in our own culture. We can then identify our own attitudes with a degree of detachment in order better to understand their implications for art education.

### *Attitudes Toward Experience in the Arts in Other Cultures*

Research by cultural historians and cultural anthropologists furnishes information with which we can clarify our understanding of the meaning of experience in the arts, the place of experience in the arts in the lives of other peoples, and the attitudes of these peoples toward the arts. Awareness of the meaning of the arts in the lives of other peoples brings into focus, by contrast, some of the attitudes toward the arts in our own way of life.

Anthropologists who have studied the arts in other cultures emphasize the extensiveness of other peoples' direct experience in the arts. Franz Boas<sup>1</sup> and Ruth Bunzel studied the ways of life in several American Indian cultures. Melville J. Herskovits<sup>2</sup> investigated the ways of life in African tribal cultures. They report the essential importance of some phase of artistic experience in the personal and communal lives of these peoples. These cultures do not make the distinctions we do between "fine" and "applied" arts. Their artistic activities vary considerably from our own, but some form of activity in the arts has always been present among them.

Among these peoples, there are individuals who are good carvers, painters, potters, or storytellers. These individuals are

<sup>1</sup> Franz Boas, ed., *General Anthropology* (New York: D. C. Heath & Co., 1938).

<sup>2</sup> Melville Jean Herskovits, *Man and His Works* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1948).

the outstanding "artists" in their communities and they lead in such work, but all the others also participate to whatever degree they are able because work in the arts is an integral part of their way of life. To emphasize the integral relationship of the arts to the main stream of life in these other cultures, Herskovits points out that in our own culture: "The arts . . . have been dissociated from the principal stream of life. Artistic creation is the function of the specialist; while the appreciation of what these specialists create is the privilege of those who at least command the leisure to pursue their avocation."<sup>3</sup>

Because "artistic creation is the function of the specialist" in our pattern of living, the widespread participation in artistic experience by other peoples is almost incomprehensible to us. We even conceive of art appreciation as a special addition to the functions we perform regularly. As such, the arts have become an interest of the few rather than the many. Most Americans are quick to say that they "know what they like" but they "know nothing about art." Most school administrators, who possess knowledge about the teaching of language, science, and social studies, are quick to advise that they are unfamiliar with the teaching of art. As a result, our children become imbued with attitudes toward the arts that result from not knowing the arts.

To members of some other cultures, the meaning of art appreciation is totally different from ours. Their appreciation of the arts, unlike our own, stems from direct participating involvement in the arts as a regular part of their lives. Many of the important day-to-day things these people do are not only functionally *useful*, but they are also *useful aesthetically*. Because these peoples do not seem to make the same distinctions we do between "functional" and "aesthetic" value, it appears that the word "useful" itself has quite a different meaning for them than for us. To them, "useful" conveys the meaning of "intrinsic worth" rather than "instrumental usefulness" in our sense. Their conception of value is different from our own. In their cultures, "nothing is

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 379.

spiritually meaningless . . ."<sup>4</sup> "The major activities of the individual must directly satisfy his own creative and emotional impulses, must always be something more than a means to an end."<sup>5</sup>

This view of life is evident in the way these people decorate their utilitarian objects, to the extent that *functional and aesthetic utility* are often inseparable. "Where art is close to life, as it is in all nonliterate cultures and in many strata of literate societies, the technical virtuosity of the artists will be lavished on objects of everyday use, far more than may be the case with the forms we classify as 'pure' art."<sup>6</sup>

Additional evidence of the cultural importance of experience in the arts is provided by cultural historians. The literature about the medieval era supports the belief that medieval society recognized particular value in artistic expression. The life people led, the beliefs they held dear, and the intensity with which they held their beliefs encouraged widespread activity in the arts. That which makes the artistic legacies of the Middle Ages "great art and unique, is neither their technical mastery nor their fidelity to the enduring laws of all great art,—though these are singular in their perfection,—but rather the peculiar impulse which informed the time, and by its intensity, its penetrating power, and its dynamic force wrought a rounded and complete civilization and manifested this through a thousand varied channels."<sup>7</sup>

Medieval culture developed from a fusion of Christian morality and the growing mercantile movement. Together they formed a wellspring of creative energy. The art of this period flourished because of its value to the people. It was intimately tied to the experiences of the time and to the kind of value that people

<sup>4</sup> Edward Sapir, "Culture, Genuine and Spurious," *American Journal of Sociology*, XXIX, No. 4 (January, 1924), p. 410.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 410.

<sup>6</sup> Herskovits, *op. cit.*, p. 413.

<sup>7</sup> Ralph Adams Cram, "Editor's Note," in *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, by Henry Adams (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1905), pp. vi, vii.

placed on their experience. It was the product of people's participation.

The arts flourished in the free towns of the medieval world where the intense faith and devotion to Christian morality produced a degree and level of creative participation which has yet to be equaled. "The towns swarmed with these workmen who happened to be artists—these artists who were content to be workmen."<sup>8</sup> "And the enormous output of the thirteenth century rested on a great popular enthusiasm. Gothic was the work of the people, of the peasants and the burghers of the guilds; and the sculpture, the wrought metal, the glorious carved screens which astonish us today . . . were the work of the village mason, the village carpenter, the village blacksmith."<sup>9</sup>

The religious faith of the period was symbolized in the complete devotion to the Blessed Virgin. "The measure of this devotion, which proves to any religious American mind . . . its serious practical vitality, is the money it cost. According to statistics, in the single century between 1170 and 1270, the French built eighty cathedrals and nearly five hundred churches of the cathedral class, which would have cost . . . more than five thousand million to replace. Five thousand million francs is a thousand million dollars . . . the share of this capital which was . . . invested in the Virgin . . . expressed an intensity of conviction never again reached by any passion, whether of religion, of loyalty, of patriotism, or of wealth; perhaps never even paralleled by any single economic effort, except in war."<sup>10</sup>

Awareness of the widespread and devoted participation in the arts during the medieval period, and the obvious value attached to it makes us better able to evaluate the attitudes toward artistic activity of our own culture.

<sup>8</sup> Reverend Percy Dearmer, "Art," in *Medieval Contributions to Modern Civilization*, F. J. C. Hearnshaw, ed. (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1922), pp. 158-59.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>10</sup> Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1905), pp. 94-95.

### *Attitudes Toward Experience in the Arts in Our Own Culture*

Prevailing attitudes toward the arts among contemporary Americans are complex. Often they are contradictory. Although the arts are becoming increasingly popular, participation in the arts as a general experience for most people is still relatively infrequent. To work in the arts is still somewhat of a curiosity in American life. Yet, one rarely finds a community which does not have an art group or an art class; more paintings or reproductions of paintings are to be found in more people's homes than ever before; the arts are beginning to lose their reputation as an interest and activity of the wealthy alone. For example, some trade union groups are encouraging art interest and activity among their members.

As a people, we tend to respect the "literal" qualities over the "imaginative" ones. In viewing a painting, we look for a "logical" statement and tend to reject the "poetic" figure. The need for "practical" activity is a dominant force in our lives.<sup>11</sup>

The familiar emphasis on *practical productivity* and *pure utilitarianism* has created a curious, if not ambivalent,<sup>12</sup> attitude toward art and the artist in the average American mind. Although the artist's product is often respected, his involvement in artistic activity still is given only small value recognition. Because the qualitative nature of artistic experience is not entirely definable in strictly tangible and objective terms, devotion to work in the

<sup>11</sup> Richard Müller-Freienfels, "The Mechanization and Standardization of American Life," in *Sociological Analysis*, Logan Wilson and William I. Kolb, eds. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1949), p. 149.

<sup>12</sup> The attitude of ambivalence is not unique in relation to the arts. Its sociological significance in American life has been noted in relation to leadership by Melvin Seeman in "Role Conflict and Ambivalence in Leadership," *American Sociological Review*, XVIII, No. 4 (August, 1953), pp. 373-80, and by Robert A. Nisbet in "Leadership and Social Crisis," *Studies in Leadership*, Alvin W. Gouldner, ed. (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950), p. 702. Gabriel A. Almond, in *The American People and Foreign Policy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1950), p. 43, considers ambivalence in relation to tradition and conformity.

arts is neither fully understood nor appreciated. Concrete things are habitually valued, accepted, and assumed to be "real"; imaginative ideas are often questioned, rejected, and considered unreal.

The application of this practical standard of evaluation can be illustrated through the way most people estimate the importance of the variety of professional specializations in the art field. Many people respect the practical work of the commercial artist more than they do the imaginative creations of the painter. They hardly consider an architect an artist, and they respect the concrete nature of the industrial designer's occupation more than the others. Their judgments stem from the things they consider important: high income, necessary service, and social prestige. North and Hatt, in their study of popular evaluation of jobs and occupations, report that: "A *high income* was most frequently mentioned by the public as the most important criterion for an 'excellent job.' Almost as many people, however, felt that a job should be judged in terms of its *necessity* and *service to humanity*. *Social prestige* and *training requirements* tied for third place."<sup>13</sup> Less than one-half of one percent of all those interviewed felt that "maximum chance for initiative and freedom places a job in 'excellent standing.'"<sup>14</sup>

When these standards for judgment and the attitudes they engender are considered in relation to the growing popularity of the arts, we are confronted with evidence that the arts are simultaneously important and unimportant in American life. There is an expanded interest in art objects, but participating experience in the arts is most frequently not appreciated. The value of the arts in experience and education can, therefore, not be explained by merely pointing to the numerous well-designed objects (both utilitarian and otherwise) in our daily lives. These are important factors, but other aspects need to be taken into account too.

<sup>13</sup> Cecil C. North and Paul K. Hatt, "Jobs and Occupations: A Popular Evaluation," in *Sociological Analysis*, Logan Wilson and William I. Kolb, eds. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1949), pp. 469-70.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 470.

Artists or laymen who participate in the arts are regarded with wonder. The work they do is considered somewhat unusual. Because they are considered to have "special talent," they even enjoy respect of a curious sort. The amateur artist regards his own participation in the arts with pleasure. The experience produces satisfaction within him which he finds difficult to explain. He may derive high satisfaction from a good round of golf or a fishing vacation, but his artistic participation provides an opportunity for personal fulfillment having no equal in other phases of his daily life. Here is an activity which has *value for its own sake*, for his own person. It differs from his regular routine although it is not relaxation, in the ordinary sense of the word. When he works with art materials he does not really "rest." He works at a "job," but it is very different from the regular work in which he is engaged.

In his regular work, we often find him performing a fragment of a total job. We also find that the choice of operations within his work is extremely limited. Someone else, and not he, assigns the tasks. Someone else sets the pace. For example, in one American community where the manufacture of clothing is a major industry, an adult education program was organized. Some clothing workers joined a group in order to be able to make things. When asked what they would like to make, several replied, "a dress." The instructor was astonished. These people spent their working days sewing dresses and now they were asking "to sew a dress." They explained that this would be their first opportunity to sew a *whole* dress. The opportunity to *conceive the design and to sew a whole dress* assumed the proportion of an aesthetic experience. These people earned their livelihood in an industry where one person sewed dress sleeves, and another simply added the buttons. The adult education program gave them the opportunity to define their own task and to execute it completely.

Most people earn their living in highly specialized, interdependent and depersonalized tasks which deny them the satis-



faction and fulfillment that work once provided. One major reason for the insecurity of many people is the fact that they are not free to exercise significant judgment or control of the job on which they work.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, for most people, work is only a way to earn a living, and leisure time activities have become the sources for personal satisfaction. The occupations of not only factory workers but also of white collar workers and even some professional people are routinized and controlled by a channel of authority.<sup>16</sup> "Strictly speaking, the factory worker is not even a complete machine, but only a portion of a machine, with no more independence than a cog-wheel or driving belt."<sup>17</sup>

The individual as a "cog-wheel or driving belt" implies much more than that he performs a routine job. It is not that his job is merely routine. Artists and craftsmen perform many routine operations in their work. The difference is that an efficiently routinized and segmented job limits a man's scope, his measure of choice, and his freedom.<sup>18</sup> *Men must enjoy freedom of choice in some endeavor to satisfy their basic needs.* "If . . . people are not free to control their working actions they, in time, habitually submit to the orders of others and, in so far as they try to act freely, do so in other spheres. If they do not learn from their work or develop themselves in doing it, in time, they cease trying to do so, often having no interest in self-development even in other areas. If there is a split between their work and play, and their work and culture, they admit that split as a common-sense fact of existence. If their way of earning a living does not infuse their mode of living, they try to build a real life outside their work. Work becomes a sacrifice of time, necessary to building a life outside of it."<sup>19</sup>

The arts provide people with opportunities for free, imaginative, and disciplined choice. This is why a hobby is attractive to so many people. It is relaxation, in a way, but very exciting

<sup>15</sup> C. Wright Mills, *White Collar* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 59.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 225, 226.

<sup>17</sup> Mills, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>18</sup> Müller-Freienfels, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

and highly demanding. Perhaps this is why the evening potter and the Sunday painter *cannot fully explain* why they spend their leisure time as they do. They nevertheless enjoy it, and once they have tasted of its quality and internal pleasure they anticipate every occasion for further participation.

Here, then, is a new and growing cultural attitude toward the arts. Many people are being attracted to art groups to work, and they are finding personal satisfaction through artistic experience. Yet, if we were to describe the dominant attitudes of our culture toward artists, we would need to say that the artistic profession is not among the most valued. This estimate stems not only from the fact that many artists earn less money than other people do, but also from the popular belief that artists are not "practical"; they defy tradition; they don't really "think"; and they are "emotional." There is "the tendency to equate aesthetic and intellectual subtlety with the lack of manliness—artists and intellectuals are 'queers.'"<sup>20</sup> These beliefs are present among the various socio-economic groups in our society. They are evident in educational circles, too. In spite of this tendency to devalue aesthetic sensitivity, North and Hatt's study of the popular evaluation of jobs and occupations reveals that the occupation of the "artist who paints pictures that are exhibited in galleries" is rated higher, on a five-point scale, than the sociologist, accountant, musician in a symphony orchestra, building contractor, economist and public school teacher, but lower than psychologist, nuclear physicist, lawyer, dentist, chemist, architect, scientist, physician and government official.<sup>21</sup>

To some groups in our society, art is synonymous with social snobbery. It is the object of a special kind of respect, and sometimes even envy. To some, it *seems* to offer license and freedom to behave in other than the accepted fashion. Behavior which would be strictly marginal *under ordinary* circumstances is often accepted with some tolerance when observed in the artist, or even in the connoisseur of the arts.

<sup>20</sup> Almond, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>21</sup> North and Hatt. *op. cit.*, p. 466.

This places the arts in our culture in a rather odd position. Unlike the people in other cultures, whose actions demonstrate the importances of the arts in their daily lives, we simultaneously respect and devalue the arts. Artistic activity is considered impractical by many, and yet it is given unique recognition and admiration. Artists make sacrifices to enjoy the arts as a full-time occupation. Certain social classes and groups in our society seem to view the arts with particular admiration. Among certain economically comfortable groups, art is a mark of "culture." Among some sections of the middle class, art appears to be a necessary requisite to become "cultured." Often, interest in the arts is tolerated by men and sought after only by women. Many groups still view the arts as a "ladies'" interest.

In spite of evidence that the human values in art experience are hardly realized, growing numbers of individuals are seeking personal participation in the arts. Proof of this fact is contained in the sharp increase in the amount of art materials manufactured and sold. The National Art Materials Trade Association estimates that "the retail volume in art materials is well over \$150,000,000 a year, triple the figure for 1948."<sup>22</sup>

Increasing numbers of people are beginning to recognize that their personal fulfillment and satisfaction require activity in which they can participate of their own free will, where they can exercise a full measure of choice, and where they can pass judgment on the choices they make. These are some reasons why artistic experience is gaining popularity. They are reasons which account for the relaxed visit to an art gallery, the purchase of a picture to hang in one's own home, and the sometimes apologetic admission that, "I do a little painting, too."

An all-consuming interest can be observed in the man who has a basement hobby to which he gives of himself completely in his free time. A similar interest is present in the woman who belongs to a flower and garden club, not for social contact alone but also for real pleasure and a sense of achievement in her work.

<sup>22</sup> *Newsweek*, XLIII, No. 2 (January 11, 1954), p. 50.

The children who attend craft classes at playgrounds and community centers and the housewives who attend art classes for the general public at many art museums do so because of such an interest. It is present also among the classroom teachers and teachers in training who discover themselves when they are given the opportunity and help to experience the arts as people rather than as purveyors of "practical easy methods" for teaching children.

### *How Some of Our Cultural Attitudes Developed*

The element of social snobbery at times attached to the arts can be explained in part by its historical roots. Since the medieval period, artistic experience has become less a communally shared experience; for a long time, it was the concern of only a small part of our social group. With the development of technology during and since the Renaissance, and the values and goals it encouraged, interest in art experience became an enterprise for professional artists. Wealthy people assumed the function of giving financial support to artists, and wealth grew to be synonymous with art and "culture." The meaning of the word culture seemed to change, from *being* cultured, educated, and concerned with the humanities to *having* "culture" which was overlaid like a veneer of the "finer things in life."

As American wealth and fortunes grew, Americans began to assume the role of the "art patron" to partake of the "finer things in life." To gain social status on a "cultural" level, the newly wealthy sought artistic contacts and the arts came to be used as a social tool rather than as a social medium. "Culture" assumed a new meaning and purpose to the extent that it became one yardstick to measure social status.

The emphasis and value placed on technology with its scientific and intellectual accompaniment also have some historical roots. The growth in scientific achievement and material improvement encouraged the belief that scientific rational investiga-

tion could promise the total solution to human problems. It seemed to offer an avenue to continuous uninterrupted progress. The emotional feeling-tone of the art experience made no direct and obvious contribution to those values which were being held in primary position. The arts were consequently reduced to successively lower stages in the general social and economic scale.

### *Some Evidence of Changing Attitudes*

Scientific achievement and material improvement through technological specialization produced new conditions with problems of their own. People who were unable to find satisfaction or fulfillment in their economic, social, or recreational experiences began to discover new interests in purely private pastimes—hobbies which provide an opportunity for a new part-time endeavor. Although often curious, hobbies perform a vital function. They permit an individual to focus his particular abilities and capacities, and to exercise them to completeness. The all-absorbing nature of activity in the arts produces sensitive and challenging satisfaction—the kind that all of us work and search for to satisfy some of our basic needs.

American attitudes toward the arts are conflicting. Even those that appear dominant seem to carry contradictory overtones. For example, the successful business man or the disinterested worker who brashly offers the comment that "art is not for me" nevertheless shows his curiosity about the "peculiar" fellow who is an artist. Although a man may insist that he does not need an all-absorbing interest, he admires the fellow who is completely engrossed in his hobby craft.

In our culture, where art "does not pay," many people are beginning to discover that it does have value, at least for themselves. Here, then, is a fundamental cultural problem that faces all of us—laymen, teachers, and children. How can education help to resolve some of the conflicting attitudes toward the arts? How can education help people participate in the arts to their deep

satisfaction? What do we know about human behavior to help teachers teach the arts most effectively?

To accomplish this end, we need to search further into the knowledge about some of the characteristics of people's experience. We could teach the arts better if we knew more about the things that are satisfying, the conditions under which people attain satisfaction, and the kind of satisfaction which is productive of growth. Understanding experience can help us in teaching children so that learning becomes the continuous quest for fuller experience.

*Education through art is more than learning about art in a narrow aesthetic sense. Activity in the arts and the development of aesthetic sensibility are intimately tied to human experience. Artistic activity is one of the avenues by which human experience takes on richness and meaning.*

### *Summary*

There are two approaches from which to evaluate the arts in American life: the quantity and quality of art objects, and the prevailing attitudes toward participating experience in the arts. Both are important to art education. They influence the attitudes of the children we teach.

There is much evidence to show the expanding popular interest in the quantity and quality of art objects. Despite many indications of an increasing popular desire for participation in the arts, prevailing attitudes which prize the "practical" and "utilitarian" conflict with the artistic and aesthetic. Compared to peoples of other cultures, we, as a people, still attach relatively little value to artistic activity.

Many people, prompted by the fragmented nature of their occupational and recreational experience, seek personal satisfaction in the arts; their new interest is respected but not generally appreciated. As a result, teachers are faced with a cultural dilemma to be solved through education. The dilemma involves

the paradox that, although many individuals are discovering art activity as a source of personal fulfillment and satisfaction, there exists the general feeling in our culture that the arts are not practical, not useful, and hence not basically important.

Teachers can best fulfill their educational task of helping people discover the value of experience in the arts by knowing and understanding the needs of people. This is their most effective tool. Before looking at those characteristics of human experience which are particularly pertinent to a foundation for art education, one more preliminary step will be useful.

### 3

## The Arts in a Changing Educational Program

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ANY single teaching area in the school program is influenced by the importance it enjoys in American life and culture. Its specific development, however, takes place within the framework of educational thought.

The current tendencies in art education reflect both the dominant attitudes toward the arts in our culture and the effects of changing educational practices. The history of art education is an integral part of the flow of educational change in American schools.

### *Some Reasons for Changing Educational Practices*

There can be little doubt that American schools are changing. Curriculum content is being modified; new teaching materials are being introduced, and inadequate teaching methods are being improved through better procedures.

Some changes are the result of information newly acquired through continuous research into the physical and social-psychological aspects of human growth and development. For example, many school boards are constructing new buildings and remodeling old ones in light of information about the educational needs of growing children. Many teachers are changing their



habits and methods of teaching through the application of enlightened understanding of the learning process and the behavior of children and youth. Although many practices are continued in ignorance of the best available knowledge, basic educational changes have come from *knowing more about the dynamics of human development and human relations*.

Other educational changes are caused by changes in community life which are placing new and different demands on the public schools. The public schools are supported by a democratic community to serve its cultural needs. The schools' role, therefore, is to educate the community's children to cope with the problems of a changing community life. Teachers strive to fulfill this role by using the best available knowledge about the dynamics of human behavior.

Changes in a way of life are continuous. From studies in history, sociology, and anthropology, we know that, as a way of life changes, people discover the need to live within a new set of relationships. Social institutions through which people live take on different functions. Often one institution finds it necessary to absorb some functions which had been performed previously by another institution.

All of us have experienced the many little ways in which our own communities have changed in recent years. Cities have grown larger and more congested. To escape the discomfort, those who were able have joined or organized new suburban communities. From these changes have emerged new problems of health, safety, education, and welfare to trouble both cities and suburban communities. Partially for this reason, as well as for many others too, President Eisenhower created a new cabinet post for a new governmental department, Health, Education and Welfare. This is one example of the changes in community life causing a change in the form and function of part of our governmental institution.

The school, as an institution in American life, is also changing its functions. These changes result from expanding knowledge

about human behavior and the new demands created by a modified community life. Both these influences are critically important not only to the total educational program but also to the particular area of art education as well. Were we to ignore either influence, we surely would be open to serious error. Both are necessary for an adequate foundation of art education because each interacts with the other.

### *Some Changes in Educational Practices*

The needs of the American community are different from those of one hundred and fifty years ago. People do things differently; they act differently; they even speak differently. This change in way of life, kind of work, action, and speech has created new relationships among people.

One hundred and fifty years ago, the school in America did not need to be the place for living it should be today; but not because life did not take place in the school, or that the school failed to contribute to the life of the times. Quite the contrary, the school took care of those aspects of living for which it was designed. It needed to take care of no more because other institutions fulfilled other needs reasonably well.

Life at that time was comparatively integrated, although, in many respects, it was rather limited and circumscribed. In retrospect, it still appears relatively coherent despite many deficiencies. Our current quest for integration is not a search for a new good thing, but rather the realization that changes in our way of life have forced us to lose some of the integration we once had. We consequently are impelled to seek new avenues for integration.

When we look back, we now say that the way of life of one hundred and fifty years ago was simple because a man, and a child too, was the same kind of person all day long. A whole family lived in the same community, if not in the same house—sisters, uncles, grandmother. So did most of the other relatives. A person knew where he belonged. Some hardships he endured

were more severe than those we encounter. Yet, his home was the place where he lived, worked, made things, and spent the major portion of his life. Generally, he performed all the significant tasks of living in this one place, and with this one group of people. He knew them intimately, and they knew him intimately too.

The school did not need to create a place for living because most of the functions of living were experienced at home. *They were learned in the home*, and the school placed limited emphasis upon them. School, therefore, was a different kind of place. It concentrated on the aspects which people in the home could not provide. It was a "finishing school" where certain learnings were superimposed to complement the learnings that had already taken place.

This is no longer the sole function of the school. Complexity and interdependence are among the chief characteristics of contemporary life. A multitude of pressures and interests influences each of us. Our work and a large part of our leisure and recreation are carried on outside of our homes, so that we neither use our homes as much nor in the same ways as our grandfathers did. Our homes are certainly important to us, but we do not "live" in them in the same way as the individual of the early nineteenth century. Some of the most significant activities of our lives occur away from home. At home, the life we lead is different from our life at work. Our neighbors are not always our friends. We know them, but we do not really share friendships with them. By and large, we have few intimate friends. Most of our contacts are very impersonal. Our specialized existence often forces us to act as if we were different persons in the varied situations in which we find ourselves regularly.

Sociologists say that one reason why our lives are not integrated is that a contemporary American finds it difficult to really be himself. He is composed of many, many selves. He plays different roles according to the different circumstances under which he carries on his life. He is a different person at home and at work,

different with different groups of people. Sometimes it is very difficult for him to reconcile these roles. Often they seem contradictory. His life certainly cannot be characterized as "consistent."

In our present way of living, an individual's job, recreation, and associations all tend to detract from the importance of his home. Fewer activities of living occur in and around his home. He works in a factory, shop, or office; much of his recreation tends to be passive and public; many of his associations with other people center around his club, fraternal order, or church. As a result, home no longer fulfills its former function in his life. As a result, too, his home *no longer fulfills its former function in the education of his children.*

Our homes are no longer able to provide all the necessary educational experiences derived from many of the tasks, pleasures, tensions, and disappointments in our lives. This reduction in educational function is characteristic of most homes. No doubt this is more pronounced in some large urban communities than in rural areas. Sociological studies, however, indicate that the urban way of life is making direct inroads on customs in rural communities.<sup>1</sup> The differences in this respect are growing less and less. There are variations in degree, but some of the basic educational functions that the household used to perform in both areas have already been, or need to be, taken over by other institutions. This is a new responsibility imposed on the school by changes in community life.

This is one major reason why educators now believe that a school can help children learn better by providing opportunities to solve problems of living. To say that education is not a preparation for life but life itself means, in part, that schools should provide the quality of education that living, working, and playing in the home used to provide. This is one of the important reasons why many schools are encouraging active meaningful experiences

<sup>1</sup> Robert A. Nisbet, "Leadership and Social Crisis," in *Studies in Leadership*, Alvin W. Gouldner, ed. (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950), p. 712.

to allow children to react to each other in varying social situations. Such experiences provide some of the requisites for learning which the home used to furnish but no longer does. They provide a fertile atmosphere where an individual can develop through the process of *formulating and solving real problems*.

### *Changes in the Culture and Education Produce Changes in Art Education*

The changing function of the total school program has been influencing the development of art education. Art education has grown through the demands of a changing education as well as through the changing attitudes toward the arts in the culture as a whole. These two factors have been present throughout the history of art education.

The teaching of art in American schools made its first appearance very early in the nineteenth century. "These schools, intended for the children of the middle stratum of American society, taught the three R's, natural history, and moral philosophy, and among the 'extras' were such appealing arts as fancy work, plain sewing, drawing, watercolor painting, painting on glass and velvet and waxwork."<sup>2</sup> These arts were part of the life in the community because they were also practiced in the home. At school, they were offered as a worthwhile pleasantry. They were academic, but this, too, was natural; the first fine arts academy<sup>3</sup> was founded at this time.

In some schools, drawing was used as a device to teach mathematics and geography. The purpose was not to correlate the studies, and it in no way resembled the current emphasis on integration in educational thought. Drawing was taught merely to give a graphic image to other studies.

After the middle of the nineteenth century, the development of manufacture created a need for skilled labor. Knowledge of

<sup>2</sup> Holger Cabill, *American Folk Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1932), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts was founded in 1805.

ornamental forms and skill in drawing them had practical value. In 1870, the Massachusetts legislature enacted a law introducing the teaching of industrial and mechanical drawing in the public schools. Drawing was taught to develop skill and dexterity. It consisted of freehand drawing by eye, as it was called, together with copying patterns of designs and architectural ornaments. Geometric forms were used as models for the chief purpose of developing skillful and imitative rendering. The four-year course of study in the high schools of Syracuse, New York, in 1869, illustrates this procedure. The first year was devoted to geometric drawing, the second to perspective drawing, the third to model and object drawing in outline, and the fourth to model and object drawing in light and shade. By about 1875, such drawing courses were widely taught.

As factory production expanded during the latter half of the nineteenth century, it stimulated the introduction of drawing in the educational program. Simultaneously, it brought about the progressive elimination of household crafts. Art, in the form of drawing, was added to the school program, for strictly utilitarian reasons, to develop practical skills. This was the period in which manual training and industrial arts were introduced in the schools for the very same reasons. The teaching of drawing obviously was not intended to provide the opportunities for artistic experience which are currently considered important. Such a need was not yet recognized.

American life was in a period of unlimited expansion. Geographic frontiers were open, as were the frontiers for material accomplishment. In this period, the basic industries took the form many of them have today. The railroads spun their web across the country, making isolated areas more accessible; people and goods were able to move more freely. The emphasis in most endeavors was on practical and material utility.

At the turn of the century, two separate emphases appeared in the teaching of drawing: mechanical and freehand drawing. Mechanical drawing became part of the industrial arts; freehand

drawing emerged into a limited art program with "cultural" overtones. Art appreciation was added to freehand drawing to include study of the heritage of painting and sculpture. Like all teaching at the time, art was taught in an authoritarian manner. Children were first required to draw cylinders, cones, spheres, cubes, and prisms. Then they drew various utensils emphasizing such details as lips, spouts, handles, and feet. Art appreciation gave children more names, titles, and dates to remember. The children bought tiny "penny prints" of famous works of art about which they learned technical and historical information.

Drawing and art appreciation were added to the school program as the culture sensed the need for some of the "finer things in life." Current courses of study no longer use the term "finer things in life," but the same philosophy often still persists. Some courses of study in current use talk about the appreciation of "beauty" as if beauty existed only in the arts. Art education was aiming to add a bit of "beauty" to things presumably ugly.

The cleavage between "fine" arts and "practical" arts became pronounced. Even today this attitude still persists in most schools. Craft activities like work in clay, leather, metal, and bookbinding were assigned to the industrial arts. They were taught from a purely mechanical point of view, and little consideration was given to the aesthetic aspects of the designs and constructions that were made. The fine arts were "cultural," though useless for practical purposes. The industrial arts were taught for "functional" and "useful" skills. In creating this division, the schools were in harmony with the attitudes that were current in the community. The arts had no real value in the culture, nor were they any more valuable in the educational program.

Usefulness was measured in a hard and practical way. The criterion for usefulness was its material value. It was applied as a standard of measure to most areas of education. Reading, writing, and arithmetic were useful. A few other things were too. For a particular subject to be useful, a person had to be able to do something practical with it. We are only now beginning to realize

that the development of healthy inner sensibilities has a very practical value.

### *A New Course for Art Education Charted by Changes in Education and the Arts*

In the 1920's, three concurrent developments made sharp impacts on art education suggesting new directions in purposes and procedures for the teaching of art. French painting, which had heralded a revolution in the visual arts early in the century, began to have a massive popular impact in this country; developments in education by men like John Dewey demonstrated the need for a redefinition of the purposes and methods of education; Franz Cizek's work with children through the arts became known.

The new French painting was introduced to America through the famous "Armory Show" in 1913. Its dynamic emphasis on structure and form created an upheaval in the professional arts. It reestablished the visual arts as media for subjective expression. In art education, Arthur W. Dow reflected this in his criticism of imitative drawing in the teaching of art. In *Composition*,<sup>4</sup> Dow pointed to the nature of visual structure in the arts. He analyzed aspects of harmonious visual relationships as they are developed through the organization of line, form, and color.

Under the leadership of John Dewey, attention was directed to the responsibility of education in a democratic society. Emphasis also was placed on the nature of the learning experience in the education of children. The active and experimental solution of problems was seen as the point where productive learning takes place. Learning problems were to be within the developmental capacities of children; they were to be conceived with the help of children.

From Franz Cizek came emphasis on creative activity. Children needed opportunities to move freely, to test and to manipu-

<sup>4</sup> Arthur W. Dow, *Composition* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1929).



late materials. By involving them in experimental and exploratory activity, the uniqueness of their individual personalities would be nurtured and developed.

These three streams of thought—the introduction of French painting, the influence of John Dewey, and the knowledge of Cizek's work with children—reinforced and accelerated each other's influence on the teaching practices in art education. Teachers began to encourage their children to use the arts as media of expression. They discovered that the teacher's role is to help children create aesthetic forms in order to convey their ideas and feelings. Teachers began to see that the quality of an art form is intimately related to the way children learn to use the arts to *express their ideas aesthetically*. Visual form became an instrument through which children could lift their ideas above the commonplace level to express them meaningfully. Children learned to control the elements of visual form in the process of painting their ideas. Teaching began to focus attention on helping children to express their ideas uniquely and imaginatively.

As schools began to answer the needs for educational change, they incorporated new opportunities for active learning. Sound art education was a promising avenue through which some of these needs could be fulfilled. The new directions in art education thereby grew out of new discoveries in artistic form and new insights into the role of expressive activity in the developmental growth of children.

Although the new directions in art education were promising and full of vitality, it should not be assumed that they encompassed all of American education. Even now, after three decades, many schools still hold to the general point of view which was typical of the late nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth. In these schools, art is still being taught in an authoritarian manner through a very limited type of drawing and painting. These are taught without reference to other activities in the arts. As a result, intimately related aspects of the arts are arbitrarily and artificially divided.

In one high school, for example, two independent programs were being conducted; one was an "art" program and the other was "crafts." In the art class, the students were required to copy a picture and to paint it three times: first in primary colors, then in secondary colors, and finally in analogous colors. When asked what they were doing, the students replied that they didn't quite know but they didn't like it. They were requested to use color mechanically. There was no opportunity for them to study the use of expressive color combinations in the process of painting ideas that were meaningful to them. Their own ideas were ignored, and they were asked to learn a set of authoritarian and, to them, meaningless rules.

The "crafts" program in this same school provided opportunities for children to make things. In contrast to the work done in the "art" program, these things were considered "practical." Emphasis was placed on learning to manipulate the materials "correctly" with no reference to aesthetic quality of the articles made. It is significant to note that these two programs were in a school where considerable progress had already been made toward the general improvement of the curriculum. It was apparent, however, that the "art" and "craft" teachers had no insight into, nor were they interested in, the concepts of learning and education with which other teachers in the school had become acquainted. These two teachers were teaching their "subjects" in isolation from each other and from the rest of the school. The experience of the students was equally isolated.

Despite the many improvements in the teaching of art resulting from the new directions in art education, the practices in this high school are typical of the contradictions and confusion that still exist. They indicate a lack of integration between the human meanings in the arts and the processes of education. In other schools, where art teachers and their colleagues have absorbed the developments in general educational thought, the teaching of art has assumed a vital educational role. Experience in the arts has become meaningful in the education of children to the degree

that teachers have become sensitive to the relationships between emerging trends both in art education and in general education.

### *Challenge to Art Education*

Art education is striving to fulfill the educational promise of its new directions. This effort has been retarded because old assumptions based on antiquated knowledge still dictate the methods used by many teachers. These old assumptions contradict the new directions. Many teachers still adhere to outmoded and unreliable assumptions because they have not become sufficiently acquainted with the information that research has revealed to clarify the basic problems of teaching through the arts.

New information suggests that new directions require fresh teaching solutions. These must not be superimposed on outmoded assumptions and practices. When they are superimposed so that both exist, contradiction and confusion are inevitable.

For example, a teacher cannot claim that he is trying to educate for intelligent independence if he still requires children to crayon within the lines of the hectographed stencil he has prepared. Regardless of the appearance of the drawings, proven knowledge tells us that such a procedure perpetuates and even encourages dependency and timidity.<sup>6</sup> The stencil procedure is the index to the quality of the learning. In this case, it contradicts the purpose verbalized by the teacher. This new purpose was superimposed superficially because it did not change the old procedure.

Similarly, the teacher who is sensitive to the inherent nature of relationships in aesthetic form shows confusion when, in teaching, he separates the elements of visual form into artificial exercises, thus preventing them from functioning in relation to

<sup>6</sup> Irene Russell and Blanche Waugaman, "A Study of the Effect of Workbook Copy Experiences on the Creative Concepts of Children," in *Eastern Arts Association, Research Bulletin*, Viktor Lowenfeld, ed., III, No. 1 (April, 1952), pp. 5-11.

each other. When he asks students to work on exercises of form or color, without relating them to real painting problems, he does not educate for sensitive aesthetic judgment. Anyone can test the fact that two *identical* forms of the same color will look *completely different* when placed within the context of different pictures. And, *when forms look different, they mean something different* in visual art language. Students can grow sensitive to the relationships of line, form, color, and space only as they deal with these in real problems.

When a teacher says that *experience* in the arts has value for personal development and, at the same time, limits his art program to making things that have narrow practical utility, he, too, reveals confusion. If the arts contribute to a healthy personality, they do so largely because of the nature of experience in the arts. The practical utility, in this case, is the encouragement to healthy personality growth. Only in a lesser degree is it the object made for some other purpose.

It is hardly enough for teachers to assume that freedom alone will encourage positive development. Children need the security of knowing that their ideas will be respected; they need the help that will challenge their creative capacities. Information about the relationships between expressive experience in the arts and social-personal development can help define the nature of the challenge.

Improvement in teaching can be accelerated through clarifying the assumptions on which good teaching can be based. This can only be done through expanded understanding. It is retarded by shallow "methods books" on art education. Too many of these lack understanding and consequently convey the superficialities of ideas by describing "a method" for an "easy" art education. As a result, teaching procedures are often quite different from the "theory" which is professed.

In many schools, art is still taught as an unrelated grammar of line, form, and color without reference to their function in the expression of an individual's unique ideas. Verbal statements to

the contrary, too much teaching is still based on limited subject matter rather than on its roots in everyday experience. There is too much concern with the mechanics of isolated artistic media. As a result, art media are not always experienced with human purpose.

The primary step toward the solution of the basic problems of art education is the recognition of the fundamental questions that need to be answered. These questions grow out of relationships between the process of activity in the arts and the process of growth through education. Our ability to ask the critical questions will enable us to use the sources of information for the solution of the problems.

### *Summary*

The teaching of art has developed within the main stream of American education. In general, two sources of influence have affected our schools: the cultural needs that education must satisfy, and the knowledge about behavior and learning that is the tool through which schools operate. The history of art education in American schools can be interpreted through the interaction of two major influences: the cultural attitudes toward the arts, and the developments in general education to help children toward effective growth in their culture.

The new directions in art education stem from insights into the role of the arts in human affairs and from knowledge about learning and human development. Although these new directions have invigorated the teaching of art, they have not been absorbed as generally as they need to be.

Available information is not being used. Superficial changes in method are superimposed on erroneous assumptions. The challenge to art education is to put available knowledge to work. This can be accomplished by asking the fundamental questions. Their answers can be used to solve the critical problems.

## 4

### Fundamental Questions in Art Education

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THE first chapter suggested the need to clarify values in art education. An overemphasis on teaching methods has obscured the fact that methods are only part of the teaching problem. To have meaning, they must grow out of values and purposes. *All good teachers create methods out of their own understanding.*

Solutions to the critical problems in art education do not lie in making choices among several teaching methods. Sound solutions depend rather on a clear understanding of the values and purposes of experience in the arts. It surely would be fruitless for teachers to select individual or group activity, to develop skills or free expression, to teach for process or product, to integrate or segregate, to emphasize aesthetic or social values and other such opposites. A teacher who is aware of the implications of these seemingly conflicting teaching purposes will be able to create the methods appropriate to the development of creative behavior in children. The basic contributions to knowledge in art education reveal some of the implications of these opposites. They will enable us to see the frame of reference out of which the fundamental questions grow.

#### *Basic Contributions to Knowledge in Art Education*

In recent years, basic information has been added to our knowledge of art and art education. This information can have far-

reaching effects in clarifying some of the confusion in teaching practices. It can enable us to recognize the contradictions between this new knowledge and those previous assumptions on which many teaching procedures have been based.

A portion of the literature about art and art education describes three basic areas of information: (1) that the parts of an aesthetic form are organically unified; (2) that creative experience is an organic process; and (3) that growth through creative experience proceeds through natural developmental stages.

*The parts of an aesthetic form are organically unified.* They are related to each other; they depend upon each other for their existence; their meanings are completely changed when separated from one another.

In this sense, an aesthetic form may be compared to a living organism. The relationships among the parts are rhythmic, alive, and dynamic. The parts operate interdependently within a unified structure.

Organic unity is the common denominator of all aesthetic form. Regardless of the art medium in use or the "style" of presentation, all the arts respond to this basic criterion. To the degree that a form is not unified and organic, it becomes disorganized, weak, and non-aesthetic.

Aesthetic forms are also unique; their styles vary from individual to individual and from culture to culture. Uniqueness and style, however, should never obscure the basic commonality among aesthetic forms—their organic unity.

According to Gyorgy Kepes, an aesthetic form in the visual arts is a "created image" brought into being by a person "through a process of organization." This created image "has an organic spatial unity; . . . it is a whole the behavior of which is not determined by that of its individual components, but where the parts are themselves determined by the intrinsic nature of the whole."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gyorgy Kepes, *Language of Vision* (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1944), p. 16.

To Henry Schaefer-Simmern, organic unity stems from indivisible visual relationships. Organized structure results from the interaction of two elements, figure and ground. "Figure" is any form as seen in relation to its "ground." It is the object against its background. Figure is controlled by ground. It can appear big or small, bright or dull, significant or insignificant by virtue of its ground. "Figure cannot exist without ground. This indissoluble union marks the most primitive beginning of artistic configuration—of artistic form."<sup>2</sup>

Aesthetic form, then, cannot be dissected into single elements, nor can a single element be separated from the system of relationships of which it is a part. Teachers can educate for aesthetic sensitivity by encouraging the continuous awareness of relationships. To guard against impairing the aesthetic unity, a teaching method cannot separate color from form, or drawing from design, or design from function, or the manipulation of an art medium from an individual's idea, or a principle from its operation in human experience. In short, no single element can be considered outside its context lest aesthetic unity be destroyed. Attention may be given to one element for purpose of analysis, but if separated from its context it no longer functions aesthetically. Aesthetic means unified, organized structure.

*Creative experience is an organic process.* Its elements include the related human functions of seeing, perceiving, reacting, organizing, and acting. An individual sees something; he perceives its meaning; he reacts to it; he organizes his functions in relation to it; he acts in terms of it.

Seeing and perceiving is an organizing process through which individuals create meaningful images. "To perceive an image is to participate in a forming process; it is a creative act."<sup>3</sup> Included is "the following up of the sensory qualities of the visual field and the organizing of them."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Henry Schaefer-Simmern, *The Unfolding of Artistic Activity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Kepes, *op. cit.*, p. 15.



Creative experience in the visual arts involves seeing organically to perceive the relationships within one's field of vision. The objects a person sees in his visual field are only part of the image he perceives. This image also includes his own attitudes toward those objects. To illustrate, a child who sees a fire engine racing down the street perceives more than the fire engine. He is excited by the color, the noise, and the movement. All these are attractive to him and are part of his total image.

Organic perception is the simultaneous "seeing and feeling" so that both come together in the creation of a new visual image. This coming together is the essence of a creative act. Effective teaching encourages the student to recognize the relationships between what he "sees" and what he "feels" about the things he encounters in his experience.

Organic perception is a basic element in the process of organizing and building unified aesthetic structures with visual art materials. The picture a child paints of the event he perceived organically is a unified structure built through his organization of lines, forms, and colors with the materials of the arts. "Teaching students to draw with satisfactory pictorial organization," says Hoyt L. Sherman, "is to a major degree a process of teaching them to see with perceptual unity."<sup>4</sup>

In talking about the organic unity of creative experience, Viktor Lowenfeld uses the word "identify" to describe the importance of helping children to perceive organically. A teacher can help a child identify himself with all the aspects of the idea he chooses to draw. Instead of superficial praise or criticism, the child needs help in perceiving the idea he is trying to draw.

A child who encounters difficulty in his drawing and becomes frustrated needs help in comprehending his idea just as much as he needs encouragement to maintain confidence in his ability. "To boost the child's confidence in his drawing ability would only increase the child's frustrations . . . If he cannot identify

<sup>4</sup> Hoyt L. Sherman, *Drawing by Seeing* (New York: Hinds, Hayden & Eldredge, 1947), p. 2.

himself with it [the idea], the motivation of the *experience* must be boosted and not the drawing activity!"<sup>5</sup> Lowenfeld also uses the word "identify" to communicate the totality of seeing-feeling-acting. To emphasize the action alone (in this case drawing) without its relationship to seeing and feeling hinders creative effort. "Even the simplest drawing, so long as it is the result of visual conceiving, always points to the producer's intimate relation to the subject of his representation. It is this innermost connection between subject matter and artistic form which assures an organic unfolding of one's inherent artistic abilities."<sup>6</sup>

According to Herbert Read,<sup>7</sup> experience in the arts is organic and thereby integrating because in the process ideas, feelings, and sensations are merged into a totality. If the purpose of education through art is to encourage creative experience, it must facilitate the organic process of seeing-feeling-acting. When a teaching method separates and isolates elements like style, manipulative technique, or the superficial aspects of form, it discourages the organic flow of creative experience.

*Growth through creative experience proceeds through natural developmental stages.* Children grow through stages of neuromuscular control. They develop capacities to see and to coordinate their bodily movements and to manage skillfully the manipulation of materials. Children also develop through stages of conceptual understanding. Beginning with themselves as the center of their universe, they grow in their understanding of the relationships among themselves and other people, things, space, and time.

A child's neuromuscular control and his conceptual understanding interact one with the other. His ability to move about and manipulate objects enables him to learn and to conceptualize his experiences. This helps him to move more effectively and to

<sup>5</sup> Viktor Lowenfeld, *Creative and Mental Growth* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1952), p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Schaefer-Simmern, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>7</sup> Herbert Read, *Education through Art* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1945).

organize materials with purpose. Both his purposes and his manipulative capacities are limited by his conceptual understanding.

The way a child organizes forms and places objects in his paintings is an index to his control and his understanding. He creates a visual image of both. His paintings are an index to his development.

Both Lowenfeld and Schaefer-Simmern have contributed detailed information explaining how children convey their understandings in natural developmental stages through their art work. This information gives teachers a working idea of how children "see" and "form" images of their experiences. Lowenfeld emphasizes the chronological development of visual conceiving of children. Schaefer-Simmern places equal emphasis on maturity and experience levels.

In evaluating the needs of individual children for purposes of teaching, chronological development and maturity level are significant. Together, they provide essential information for sound teaching. Children develop through sequential stages, but the lack of effective experience may cause retarded maturity. A teacher may expect a nine-year-old to draw at a nine-year level, but she must allow for the possible discrepancy between age level and maturity level. Children do not always perform according to age level expectations for visual conception in the same way as they sometimes either surpass or fail to achieve expected age level performance in reading or in their social relations.

These three areas of information—the parts of an aesthetic form are organically unified; creative experience is an organic process; and growth through creative experience proceeds through natural developmental stages—have not been equally assimilated into the practice of art education. The information about developmental stages is becoming rather generally accepted, but it is contradicted when the organic nature of creative experience is violated. To teach as if "seeing" were separate from "understanding" is to divide the organic unity that makes for creativity. In

the same way, to separate elements of design and visual form, and to exercise them out of context, destroys organic aesthetic relationships. A teacher's hope that elements of design or aspects of experience can be separated for purposes of teaching with the expectation that they can later be added together grows from outmoded assumptions. Unified totality is different from the sum of its separate parts.

### *A Frame of Reference*

A foundation for art education needs to bring together knowledge about the process of artistic experience and the attitudes of our culture toward the arts. Such a synthesis can help teachers clarify the values and purposes of education through the arts. Teaching methods can then be firmly based.

The mixed attitudes toward the arts in the culture have imposed an air of defensiveness on many teachers. In art education, the implications of the positive emerging tendencies in the culture which value the need for personal artistic experience have not yet been realized. Through this lack of positive realization, art education has become a victim of the ambivalence of our culture toward the arts. Clarification of the cultural needs for creative experience has thus far been inadequate.

Art experience and art product, although related to each other, can also be contradictory. When a teacher is able to differentiate between an *art product alone* and the *art product as a component part of artistic experience*, he can turn these toward positive teaching advantage. He can see the differences between art objects in our daily lives and cultural pressures on individuals to sense the value in artistic experience.

An art product, unrelated to human values and to the human experience producing it, can appear lifeless and sterile. At the same time, process, unrelated to the limitations of the activity through which it develops, can grow loose, uncontrolled, and meaningless. Conflicting attitudes related to product and experi-

ence are reflected in art education. When art education merely mirrors the conflict, as it appears to be doing, confusion results. Art educators who emphasize human needs transcend this conflict through awareness of the way education can seek to resolve it.

The discussion in Chapter 2 suggests that emphasis on artistic products cannot be the major focal point for a program in art education. The primary question relates to the cultural outlook toward involvement in artistic experience, the value it holds for our way of life. In our culture, the value of artistic action can satisfy the needs of individuals in a very unique way.

In other cultures, participation in the arts was an integral part of the mode of living—the ideals and aspirations of communal life. In our own culture, *artistic action is only now being recognized as a component of healthy human behavior*. There is growing awareness of the positive value of creative involvement for the satisfaction of personal needs, for social well-being. This changing point of view offers potent means for art education to develop as a significant aspect of human experience. It presents the challenge for art education.

Comparative cultural studies show how artistic action could be widespread and valued in the way of life. In other cultures, participation in the arts grew out of a way of life which seemed to encourage and foster it. This is not the source of artistic energy today, nor can we hope to return to the way of life which would encourage it for us *in the same way* as it did for other peoples. Today, value in artistic action is being recognized *in spite* of dominant factors operating in opposition to it. Creative involvement is giving experience in the arts a new source of energy and value in its own right.

From this point of view, art education in the public schools is still circumscribed by some of the negative attitudes toward the arts in the culture. It needs to generate the energy to transcend

The arts in the schools are victimized both by the cultural position of the arts generally and by the indecision in the process of art education. Teachers need to *approach the analytical level achieved by leadership in general educational thought*. Programs of teaching can then be examined in light of social-cultural factors in order to guide critical experimentation. Art education can orient its thinking toward the demands on human experience resulting from our cultural patterns. The teaching implications of the creative process of aesthetic education can become the core of the art programs in American schools.

Recognition of the developments in general education which have contributed to the potentialities of the arts can expand our understanding of the value in creative experience. Art education has received positive assistance. The discussion in Chapter 3 describes how the new directions in art education are being reinforced by changing practices in education generally. A new education for a changing way of life, as seen in many elementary schools, is ready to recognize the potential contribution of the arts in the behavioral development of children. Assistance to art education has come from general educational and psychological sources.

From this frame of reference it is now possible for us to review some of the significant questions in art education. We can identify the basic problems they raise; we can ask new questions whose answers will describe the purpose and value of teaching art.

Questions about the teaching problems in art education are deeply interrelated. To analyze them, it is necessary to distinguish one from the other, but the meanings of each question cannot be isolated, and each must be considered in relationship to the others. To clarify their fundamental relationships, the questions in art education will be examined in three broad groups. The first encompasses questions relating to *value in the arts*; the second is concerned with the *creative process in the visual arts*; and the third group embraces questions pertaining to the

*development of personality.* Each suggests problems concerning the process of teaching in art education.

### *Questions Related to Values in the Arts*

The first group of questions stems from the dominant cultural attitudes which prize "practical" value. From this point of view, value in experience in the arts is considered "functional" and "usable" in a concrete manner. The *worth* of an experience for its *own sake* is seriously questioned. Its significance in terms of *internal* and *subjective* values to the individual is not recognized. Because subjective values cannot be measured or calculated with ease, it is assumed that they are not useful or important. This point of view contradicts the inherent subjective values in the aesthetic-social-psychological relationships through artistic experience.

This contradiction has caused art education to be on the defensive about the values of artistic experience. They have been defended in terms of the negative cultural attitudes toward the arts. This is expressed through overemphasis on the so-called "practical" value of artistic experience. An example is the discussion about the relative merits of the "practical" or "leisure time" value in the arts, which confuses the question. Basically, the question concerns the *quest for value in human experience*. When art education focuses on the everyday aspects of the arts in a narrow manner, the question is not clarified.

It is important to be sensitive to the clothes one wears, the architecture one admires, the design of a piece of pottery one selects to buy, and the style of the automobile one would have. When, however, such awareness is based on the dictates of fashion rather than on discrimination derived from experience, the value of art education is seriously limited. Education through the arts is then reduced to dealing with superficial aspects of making choices. Good design in relation to everyday living means more than the selection of well-designed products.

Through experience in the arts we seek a *design quality to living itself—individual sensitivity to relationships in the process of living.*

In this context, we also encounter the esoteric argument about the relative importance of handicrafts and machine-made objects. Some question whether a program of art education, in the midst of an industrial culture, should encourage the making of things when it is more practical, economically, to buy them. Others inquire whether art education should concentrate on the contemporary arts or on understanding those masterpieces which have endured.

What are teachers to choose, and on what basis? Is the problem simply one of choice among the alternatives given? What should a program in art education include? Is a "practical" art education a "vocational" art education? Should children learn to make things? Is a "leisure time" art education purely enjoyable, and does something enjoyable lack profit or value? Should children be educated to feel that the arts are useful for their instrumental value in correlation with other studies, or is experience in the arts intrinsically valuable in its own right? How can a teacher reconcile any of these choices in terms of the developmental needs of children as well as in terms of the dominant cultural attitudes toward value and usefulness?

These questions embrace the nature of human values and their relation to behavior. They involve the values intrinsic in aesthetic experience. They point to problems of style and meaning in visual art forms. They question whether emphasis on artistic objects, when narrowly conceived and unrelated to the experience of children, can contribute to aesthetic sensibility. These questions will be analyzed in Chapter 5.

### *Questions Related to Creative Process in the Visual Arts*

The second group of questions centers around the nature of the creative process in the visual arts. How can knowledge about



the process be used to guide methods of teaching? What are some of the components of creative process about which teachers should know? How do they operate? How can an individual be encouraged to act creatively?

How can experience in the arts lead to sensitive appreciation? If a choice is suggested between teaching appreciation or creative expression, the question would be admittedly difficult. Were we to accept John Dewey's interpretation<sup>8</sup> that appreciation is creative, like an act of expression, the question would assume a different character. Appreciation is not passive observation. *To appreciate is to observe sympathetically.* When an individual appreciates, he identifies himself with the object he is observing and makes it part of himself. Real appreciation is an active participating process with many of the dynamic qualities of the process of expression. Can appreciation be separated from expression in a program of instruction? Can they be opposed to each other without losing one or the other or both?

Whether art education should seek to develop aesthetic or social values is related to the question of expression and appreciation. *The aesthetic object, when appreciated, bears a social responsibility* because it can be appreciated only as it is *socially shared* and *socially sharable*. Aesthetic values are appreciated when individuals identify themselves with the creator through his art works. In this way, aesthetic experience becomes an avenue for social interaction. It is a significant way for children to share each other's experiences. The relative merits of the aesthetic and the social can be argued only if the social interaction that occurs when an individual appreciates and responds to a work of art is denied.

Yet it should be recognized that a work of art is capable of being appreciated only when it expresses an idea or attitude which others have, to some degree, experienced. We can appreciate what others do and share with them only to the degree that we have common experiences with them.

<sup>8</sup> John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Minton, Balch & Co., 1934).

What follows are questions concerning the nature of communication through the arts. Under what conditions do the arts become socially shared experiences? What conditions can a teacher create in his classroom so that the arts can become socially shared experiences in the education of children? Implied is insight into the linguistic idiom of the artistic process and the way it bears its social responsibility.

From this point of view, choices between appreciation or creative expression and between aesthetic and social values would indeed appear fruitless. Other choices, such as the teaching of skills or the encouragement of free expression and emphasis on process or product, would be equally unproductive.

On what basis are teachers to choose at this point? Is creative experience in the arts limited to the skillful manipulation of an art medium, or does it involve personal and subjective sensitivity merging with the media of the arts? To deal with such questions requires further analysis of the process of artistic action. This will be developed in Chapter 6.

### *Questions Related to the Development of Personality*

The last group of questions is concerned with the relationships between experience through the arts and personality development. Are there any connections among aesthetic, social, and psychological values? Shall values pertaining to personality development be emphasized at the expense of aesthetic values? Should activities in the arts be conducted individually or in groups? Should the arts be related to other phases of the school program, or should they remain a separate and special study?

Such questions involve the subjective aspects of aesthetic experience and the socially shared framework through which real appreciation occurs. Intimately related are the kinds of satisfactions which make for healthy personality development and the inherent qualities in the creative process which provide such fulfillment as the human personality seems to require.

The choice is not whether the teaching of art should or should not emphasize personality development. The question is rather: What characteristics in the artistic process offer avenues for healthy development? The choice surely is not whether art education should select to emphasize either individual or social development. The question here is: What are an individual's sources for aesthetic activity, and how does his aesthetic expression take on social significance? Such questions become even more important when we consider the significance of socially shared experience in the development of a healthy personality.

A related choice, which is sometimes suggested, questions whether to integrate the arts with other experiences of children or not. Such a choice often implies that integration merely involves the placing of two experiences side by side. Integration is the coming together of elements to produce a new form. In the arts, it hinges on the way an idea is interpreted through art materials so that both the idea and the materials assume a new form in the process.

Some experiences in the arts can be non-integrating, as, for example, when an art medium is used mechanically to illustrate a story. Experiences can also be non-integrating when a teacher imposes an adult mode of expression on a child so that the mode is unrelated to the idea or attitude the child is trying to express. For an experience to be integrating, both the idea and the style of the art form must be harmonious and related to one another. This relationship leads to new insights within the individual who is participating in the experience. Under what circumstances, then, can the artistic process be integrating? How can materials and ideas be brought into activity and merged into integrating wholeness? The discussion in Chapter 7 will explore the relationships between methods of teaching and the development of children through the arts.

All these questions, when studied in the light of available information about human behavior, can help us deal with the many basic problems which confront teachers at work with the

arts. They have a direct bearing on the way we teach, the way we pose problems to children, the scope of an art program, and the demands we make on students. The analysis of these questions will take us partially outside the field of art education. Through such excursions, we will find information about human behavior which will prove invaluable in the teaching of art.

### *Summary*

The basic problems of art education revolve around fundamental questions concerning the value and purpose of education through the arts. A study of the literature of art education reveals the following three significant areas of information to deal with the teaching problems in the field: the parts of an aesthetic form are organically unified; creative experience is an organic process; and growth through creative experience proceeds through natural developmental stages.

These three areas of information, when taken together with the cultural significance of experience in the arts and the role of educational institutions within our culture, provide a frame of reference. They enable us to find a promising perspective from which to examine the fundamental questions about art education.

There are essential relationships among the many questions pertaining to the teaching of art. To analyze the questions requires that they be distinguished one from another. To insure their relationships, they will be discussed in the following three broad groupings: (1) questions relating to value in the arts; (2) questions concerned with the creative process in the visual arts; and (3) questions embracing the development of personality.

## PART TWO

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*Values, Process, and Individual Development*

## Value of the Arts in Experience and Education

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THE general value of the arts in experience and education stems from a fundamental characteristic common to all human beings—the need to find value in the things they do. Values determine the things we do; and our actions, in turn, exert influence on our values. This, in short, is the relationship between what we think and what we do.

We function as people and as teachers through the concepts and understandings to which we subscribe. Our understandings are transformed into values. These dictate the assumptions upon which we base our value judgments; they are the foundations for the subsequent actions in which we participate. This is a circular process moving from understandings to assumptions to judgments to action and back to expanded understanding in preparation for future action. The process belongs to children as it does to adults. Their action too stems from their own understandings. In the very same manner, the teaching act and the teaching methods we employ are rooted in our understandings, in our value systems.

Although our values and actions are intimately related to each other, they are not always consistent with each other. We sometimes profess values which we contradict through our actions.

Our *real* values are reflected in our actions rather than in what we claim we would want to do.

The relationship between values and action is dynamic and ever changing. Sometimes, experience through action causes us to modify our beliefs and our values. But, because we are not always aware of our changing values and their implications, we often fail to recognize inconsistencies between some of our professed values and our actions.

### *Bases for Values in Education Through the Arts*

It hardly would be adequate to build an art program for the general education of children on the basis of values selected from the history of other cultures. At best, such values would only represent the various artistic purposes that history demonstrates. A foundation for art education for today's schools should serve the artistic needs which are emerging from our current way of life.

Although all cultures have developed some artistic forms, we know that different cultures attributed different values to their arts. These values reflect differences in the value systems governing the lives of different peoples. From their own value systems, different peoples developed a variety of art forms—different modes in the organization of visual symbols to communicate the particular view on life that was current. Merely to make a selective choice from among the artistic values of other peoples and to attribute them to our own needs, therefore, would be inadequate. Were we to do so, we would not be serving our own purposes. We would merely be accepting other people's values on the assumption that they could serve our own needs. Thus, we would run the risk of overlooking how our own values could be productive for us.

Our own approach to the arts and our reasons for working in them need to be unique with us. This is what Whitehead meant when he wrote: "Knowledge does not keep any better than

fish. You may be dealing with knowledge of the old species, with some old truth; but somehow or other it must come to the students . . . just drawn out of the sea and with the freshness of its immediate importance."<sup>1</sup> The achievement of "freshness" depends upon the way we form our educational values. Our judgment needs to reflect insight into the nature and process of value formation.

The specific values of education through the arts stem from knowledge about the growth and development of children, the cultural influences on their development, and how they learn to meet the problems of living. With this as the basis, we may assume that the values to be derived from the arts depend on *how experience through the arts best serves the purposes and needs of today's children*. Teaching methods could then be devised so that the materials, content, and process of the arts would serve those needs.

### *Changes in Value Emphases in Art Education*

During the past quarter century, while art education was growing as an integral part of the modern school movement, it redefined its educational values and purposes. As described in Chapter 3, its historical development shows how teachers modified their purposes in response to the necessity of fulfilling new needs in the emerging educational program.

Art education began its development with emphasis on the ideals of "nineteenth century beauty." It was modified according to the practical and utilitarian demands of the latter half of that century. Because the culture neither valued the arts nor supported their development, there followed an emphasis on the arts for their own sake. New art forms were being developed in an effort to break away from traditional and academic visual concepts. The relationships of visual art forms were being explored,

<sup>1</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Aims of Education* (New York: The New American Library, 1949), p. 102.



but in teaching, they were often divorced from their psychological and human relationships. Students were taught contemporary design for its own sake.

The modern school movement encouraged teachers to seek a synthesis of values from emerging educational thought, from the contemporary movement in the professional arts, and from the discovery of some of the characteristics of child development. These converging influences led art education to redefine its purposes, indeed to see new values for artistic activity in experience and education.

When art education was concerned with teaching formal art principles, the emphasis was authoritarian and academic. Instruction was based on beliefs in stereotyped artistic forms which were considered absolute and correct. These were described as beautiful, with clearly defined formulas for their recognition and, indeed, their imitation. Even as recently as 1931, the course of study in art for the elementary schools in New York City purported to teach the "conservation . . . of acceptable ideals and canons of beauty against attempts to debase artistic taste and judgment."<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of art education was to teach the "right" standards of taste and judgment. This was the point of view of the academy, and it influenced the teaching of both studio activities and art appreciation. It was based on values which recognized the quality of only certain art forms. There was one artistic form, and art education was to teach it.

Adherence to rigid academic principles has been largely discarded, but the basic values which produced such beliefs still guide much teaching. Many children are educated in the *absolute rightness* of "modern principles" and "modern styles," instead of in "academic principles" and "academic styles." They are taught to make "Shapes that serve no inner purpose, that arise from no basic need, but 'look modern.' Forms and textures . . .

<sup>2</sup> *Course of Study in Art for Elementary Schools*, Board of Education of the City of New York, December, 1931, p. 5.

copied willy-nilly from recent works rather than from older ones, and superimposed on new situations for no better reason than that they are believed to be "in the modern manner."<sup>3</sup> In this way, teaching of "modernism" again perpetuates academic values.

Such teaching leads to superficiality. It is a consequence of values which separate the inner needs of people from the things they make. It occurs when product and process are viewed as two separate phenomena so that they are divorced from the developing and growing individual. Teaching based on such separation does not encourage interaction between the person who is producing and the product he produces or perceives. It promotes rigid form which is taught and accepted. The fact that the form may be "different" and "contemporary" makes it no more valuable educationally. Educational value is not achieved by making certain "proper" judgments, but through growth in the capacity to make judgments which are appropriate to the particular problem.

We must, therefore, wonder about the value implications of the curricula in art education proposing to develop a "response to beauty," the "enrichment of life," and the "appreciation of our heritage." What do these purposes mean? Do they embrace those art forms which previously were thought to "debase artistic taste and judgment"? What form of beauty is now "correct"? Or are teachers to encourage the basic qualities of unified perceptual relationship which pervade all the arts?

What kind of enrichment of life is suggested? Is it the "cultural" veneer which fails to affect the core of the individual, or is it the enhancement of those values an individual formulates out of his own experience? What nature of appreciation does it imply? Is it the indiscriminate presentation of catalogued historical fact, or is art education to help children appreciate the immediate freshness that re-creates a work of art and makes it live in their own experience?

<sup>3</sup> Norman T. Newton, *An Approach to Design* (Cambridge, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Press, Inc., 1951), p. 80.

Does emphasis on child development mean mere admiration of the free and uninhibited activity of children? Does a basis in child development mean that art education should be guided only by the characteristic performance levels of different ages, or should it not also mean that art education needs to concern itself with the way children think and respond—the way they learn to perceive relationships in their world—according to their developmental capacities?

As art education developed, it rejected some old purposes and acquired new ones. Many purposes were accepted without awareness of their implications and consequences in the behavior of children. For example, free expression was accepted as a value by a large number of teachers who did not realize the social responsibility it required. We have since learned that, when an individual expresses himself freely, he also accepts a parallel responsibility to himself and to others lest he lose his own freedom.

To illustrate: When a teacher says to a group of children, "Choose any idea you please," without exploring any general criteria for their choices, the children will eventually lose their capacity for free choice. Free expression is not aimless. It is encouraged through neither authoritarian nor laissez-faire leadership. To be productive, free expression requires purpose, and without criteria the choice of an idea for expression ultimately becomes unsatisfying and frustrating. In a laissez-faire situation, activity is aimless and ideas do not come to mind. To gain the necessary personal security, children will often revert to "tried and true" stereotypes, the opposite of productive free expression.

At the same time, if criteria for choice are purely personal and devoid of any social dimension, free expression can become equally unproductive. Productive freedom also requires some minimum agreements among the members of a group regarding criteria for good choices. Without minimum agreement among the children and their teacher, individuals in a group grow confused and lose their capacity to express themselves freely.

Some of the new purposes of art education have received little more than lip service. In many schools, these new purposes have not basically affected the teaching in process. For example, creativity has been accepted as having value, and yet the emerging and growing nature of creativity has frequently been ignored. It is hardly enough for children to paint pictures which, on the surface, look "creative." It is entirely possible to accomplish this through a rigid routine that does not permit the children to *experience creativity*. Such experience requires involvement with ideas having personal significance. Creativity cannot be experienced when so many teachers still depend on a sequence of their own predetermined problems which are hardly varied according to the ideas that are exciting to the children.

Some teachers have tried to make art education more "practical." They have limited children's experience in the arts to activities which express the narrow "functional" definition suggested by prevailing cultural attitudes. Within this effort, there have been two tendencies: (1) to make the arts serve as a tool for teaching other subject matter areas—a mechanical interpretation of correlation—and (2) to limit the arts to the construction of objects that have obvious practical utility. Now the arts do offer rich potentialities for interpreting ideas derived from other subject matter studies; also, the construction of objects is an inherent part of activity in the arts. In the above two tendencies, however, the major focus is on the instrumental use of the arts. The emphasis is primarily on how the arts can be used to make things to the exclusion of the function of the arts to help children increase their sensitivity to the ideas they express through the things they make. Only to a minor degree do such tendencies recognize the aesthetic qualities in experience in the arts.

For example, a fifth-grade teacher in an elementary school was conducting a study of geographic bodies of water with emphasis on their effect on the growth of cities. Involved in the study was a good deal of necessary work in geography. The children learned about longitude and latitude and they made

maps. The teaching was excellent and the geographic learning derived from the construction of the maps was highly creative. However, it was hardly an art experience because its primary purpose was to create a tool for learning geography.

Another fifth-grade class was studying American industry and the children were in the midst of a detailed investigation of the manufacture of steel. After they viewed a film, examined photographs, and visited a steel mill, the teacher suggested that they all paint some pictures. In her discussion she failed to elicit the children's reaction to the magnitude and complexity of a steel mill. Instead of helping them identify themselves with the experience they encountered, her comments centered on relatively insignificant, commonplace facts about some of the machines they saw. As a result, most of the pictures painted were equally insignificant and commonplace.

The values sought by these two teachers were restricted by a narrow concept of function and utility. Their purposes, although valuable, were limited. They overemphasized commonplace fact at the expense of aesthetic invention based on deeply felt experience. The values they achieved and the purposes they fulfilled were contrary to the personal and subjective values which many people are currently discovering in the arts.

Teaching methods can be evaluated only in terms of the validity of their purposes, their underlying values. Through studying the values, purposes, and practices in particular situations, art education can accelerate its development. By dealing directly with values in relation to teaching methods, teachers can educate better for the development of meaningful qualities in human experience.

The relationships among values, purposes, and practice in action are rooted in the human process of value formation. Man is a purposive organism, and he defines his purposes through the values he holds. Values, the purposes they direct, and the actions we take are outgrowths of our value-making process. *Value making is the most characteristic process in human experience.* It is

as basic in our own everyday work as it is in the developmental education of children. It is basic to our reasons for teaching the arts and hence to the methods we employ in teaching.

### *How Values Are Formed*

Man always strives to "make sense" out of his life, and in doing so he finds that this is not a simple process. He overcomes this difficulty because of his unique capacity to reason and learn. Reason and learning enable him to understand the relationships among the various facets of his life and to "make sense" out of his existence.

For example, man can develop and use language which enables him to handle and create ideas. He can *think and work with ideas*; he can manipulate them to create meaningful images in words or pictures to formulate his understandings.

Man uses these understandings as tools to further his own development. With them, he creates new objects and situations to extend his physical comforts, his emotional well-being, and his intellectual insights. These new objects and situations are his implements of strength and power, but they do two things to him: they enlarge his range of activity, and, at the same time, they create new and unforeseen problems for him to explain and to solve.

In the process of seeking solutions to new problems, the individual frequently finds it necessary to modify some of his immediate purposes and desires. As he comes to understand the different aspects of a problem, he modifies his attitudes and his values. Usually these changes are barely noticeable, but sometimes they are fundamental and dramatic.

For example, a man may want to build a house for his family. He not only needs enough money to pay the contractor, but also he soon discovers that he must decide what kind of house he wants. He learns that the space in a house can be planned and divided in a multitude of ways to serve the needs of his family.

By taking into account the specific needs of the various members of his family along with the amount of money he can spend, he reaches a decision.

His decision is hardly the one he originally anticipated. It has become the product of all the new information he acquired as he was in the process of getting ready to act. Incorporated are new attitudes toward and insights into his family and their house. These new attitudes affect his values about his home and family.

Changes in attitude and values are also illustrated by the case of a child who wanted a puppy dog for a pet. He was eager for the fun and enjoyment he would have. He hardly realized the effect it would have on himself and the other members of his family. His father brought home a handsome puppy. It was fun to play with, but it had to be fed, it soiled the rug, and it cried at night. He discovered the care it needed, the work he had to do, and the added burden it created for his mother. As a result, he acquired new attitudes toward fun and responsibility.

In this way, *values grow out of processes of action*. Man's ideas and his artifacts are *reflected back to him*, in their full significance, *through the way he puts them to use in his social life*, through the way he acts with them in relation to himself and to others. In this way, they influence his purposes. His social action is reflected back to his purposes, and, when necessary, his experience points the way for modification.

Modifications occur in all areas of our personal-social experience. They can be exemplified dramatically by the way we are changing our ideas through our experience with space and distance. The advent of automobiles, superhighways, fast railroads, and supersonic airplanes has made distances which once appeared great seem relatively small. Consequently, we are now sensing new relationships to people in other parts of our own country as well as in other parts of the world. These new relationships are creating changes in our attitudes, purposes, and values.

The values of individual children, like our own, are formed through the way they live. Experience in the arts is one area of

their living through which they form and express their values. For example, a third-grade child in an elementary school was working on a painting. He was using several colors which he intermixed to "invent" a new color, one *he* had never seen before. His teacher had created a classroom environment where inventiveness was valued and cherished. The little boy was able to use his new color to paint a better picture. He was also better able to appreciate the inventive work in color by others.

This boy lived and worked in a schoolroom which was well planned and used. Space and equipment were rearranged and moved for each new job to be done. This experience enabled him to say, "I like a building which is more modern because it's nicer." And, when asked why, he replied, "Because it's easier to do things in it." This youngster's values were being formed through his experiences. His judgments, purposes, and action grew out of the way he lived.

Men seek to fulfill their purposes through the use of the things they make and the ideas they create. The social use of these things and ideas create new problems for them to comprehend. Consequently, there are always new purposes to fulfill. Purposes are constantly being derived from action almost simultaneously with the action itself. Our purposes have no meaning until we act upon them, but no sooner do we act than we discover reasons to modify or reconstruct them.

The process of modifying values and purposes is not repetitive. We constantly make changes, but we are not faced with the need for making the same changes. It is a circular process but ever widening. Each thing we create, and everything we learn in creating it, becomes part of us. Our frame of reference enlarges with every readaptation of our purposes. Our values, therefore, are never static. They are in a state of constant modification and expansive reconstruction.

This does not mean that the frequency and speed of value modification is regular or even. On the contrary, it varies according to the new ideas, discoveries, and artifacts that man creates



and uses to expand his way of life. When new insights, discoveries, and inventions do not basically affect our way of life, our values and purposes are modified very slowly. During some periods in human history, values were scarcely modified within the life span of an individual, except in terms of his own personal development and maturation. At other times, when new discoveries caused dramatic effects, value modifications were swift and sometimes cataclysmic.

The dramatic changes in the developmental life of a child are accompanied by the quest for new values. The child, who at the age of five leaves his home and mother to go to school, strives to develop a new value system through which he can find comfort in his new surroundings. The adolescent, who grows restless because he feels the security of childhood slipping away in the face of the intriguing, yet unknown responsibilities of adulthood, is seeking a new value system for himself. Continuous experience through the arts in dealing with new creations can be helpful to children and youth in meeting the impact of the dramatic yet natural changes in their lives.

The quest for purposeful value in man's way of life can also be seen in his search for increased levels of satisfaction, not the thin superficial "pleasures" but the deep satisfaction derived in his experience as he strives to accomplish his purposes. To achieve satisfaction, people endure discomfort, struggle, and pain. In analyzing the nature of human experience, Hadley Cantril suggests that ". . . it is the nature of man to strive for an increment in the value attribute of his experience even though he may know full well it will involve sacrifice and pain."<sup>4</sup> The fact that man is never so well adjusted that he will fail to risk, to sacrifice, and to endure pain to expand the value attribute of his experience leads Cantril to say, "This points to the conclusion that the ultimate, the most generalized goal of man is what can be called the *enhancement of the value attributes of experience*."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Hadley Cantril, *The 'Why' of Man's Experience* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1950), p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

The quest for the enhancement of the value attributes of experience has led people to belief in an over-all design in man's destiny. This belief offers explanations about aspects of experience which are still unexplainable in terms of the observed behavior of people. Yet, as we enlarge our understanding of the processes of human behavior, we become better able to describe them and we grow increasingly aware of the nature of our own destiny. We discover that purposes and values are not determined by faith in a force outside ourselves. Rather, they form a human pattern. They have human design, and they have direction. Research in the biological sciences and laboratory demonstrations of psychological phenomena cause Cantril to conclude that man's development "is ordered, and in this sense the modern student of evolution speaks of the 'appearance of purposefulness' that pervades nature. He does not, of course, invoke some outside agency to explain this apparent purposefulness but tries to account for it in naturalistic terms."<sup>6</sup>

This point of view is drawn from studies in the natural and social sciences. It provides a basis for understanding the nature of values in human behavior. It suggests a framework through which the values in artistic experience can be explained. This is the reason why man's purposive and valuing nature is important. The fact that human behavior has pattern, design, and direction is significant for a foundation for art education.

### *Limited View of Value in Artistic Experience*

The process of value formation should lead us to question one of the values often attributed to the arts. The arts are said to be universal, knowing no social differences or national boundaries. Such universality could mean two different things. It could mean that the arts provide a universal avenue for the enhancement of value attributes in human experience. On the other hand, universality could be interpreted to mean that the arts

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

themselves are universal, that art forms are understandable regardless of personal and cultural experience. The latter is a limited view and consequently it is only partially true. This obliges us to understand the different meanings in these two interpretations.

In earlier chapters, reference was made to the fact that the arts are symbolic language forms. All art forms are symbolic representations of human experiences. They symbolize the experiences, but they are never the experiences themselves. All art forms are abstract symbols of human experience.

*The meanings of the symbols in an art form are, therefore, relative to someone's interpretation of a human experience.* It is always relative to the unique interpretations, *by an individual*, living at a certain time, in a certain culture, who interprets his experience through the values he shares with his culture. Visual art forms are *visual language forms*. Although they have some universal characteristics, their *specific meanings* are relative to personal and cultural understandings.

Cats, for example, are animals—playful and sleek of body. To some, they are affectionate pets; to others, they are a nuisance. A contemporary painter, in his picture of a cat, might symbolize the sleekness or the raggedness of a cat, according to his own attitudes. In contrast, the animal cat, to an ancient Egyptian, was symbolic of his gods. He revered the animal and showed his veneration through the particular symbolic representations he created. It is important to notice that we appreciate the Egyptian sculpture of a cat for its sleekness and for the organic structure of its artistic form, but not for its godliness. The meanings we extract are our own, and they are relative to our own cultural and religious values. Although we are aware of the place of the cat in Egyptian religion, we do not value the sculpture of the cat for its religious symbolism.

The relationship between visual symbol and interpretive meaning is dramatically illustrated in the art work of children. A child who paints flowers creates symbols for flowers. When he paints

the flowers large—almost as large as the face of the person looking at them—he is creating a symbolic representation of the importance that flowers have for him. He is interpreting the meaning the flowers have for him. We can *understand* his interpretation only to the degree that we can *harmonize* our experience with his. To this extent, we can *share* with him and interpret his symbol as he intended it.

Failure to distinguish between form and symbolic meaning often causes teachers to emphasize visual structure for its own sake. On the basis of the common structural characteristics found in all art forms, we find art educators and art critics saying that "art is a universal language which knows no barriers." As has already been developed in Chapter 4, all aesthetic forms share the universal characteristic of organic unity. But it would be a mistake to take this as an end in itself. It would be as if grammatical structure in verbal language were an end in itself regardless of the meanings and ideas any language form communicates.

In addition to being organically unified, meaningful visual structure is an outgrowth of the human experience for which it is a symbol. When visual structure is separated from symbolic human meanings, the emphasis becomes one-sided. Ultimately such an emphasis distorts the significance of the form, the symbol itself, and the human meanings. There is evidence that people tend to misinterpret or even to reject aesthetic forms which are unfamiliar to them. This is as true in respect to the visual arts as it is in music and literature when the mode of expression or the experience depicted is foreign to the observer. Such aesthetic forms are surely not universal in their meaning.

Art forms become infused with meaning by the artist and have the potentiality for being understood and shared by other people. Understanding them, however, does not stem entirely from the universal characteristics of aesthetic forms. It depends, in part, on people's ability to share the experience from which the symbolic meanings were derived. The organic structure of all aesthetic forms is universal. The symbolic meanings are not,

because they are understood in terms of the observer's own cultural experience. His appreciation, therefore, can only be partial.

Exclusive emphasis on the structural aspects of artistic works obscures some of the experiential meanings which are embodied in art forms. Such emphasis fails to recognize the full meaning in a work of art and finds contentment in purely formal and ultimately sterile evaluation. Yet we need to recognize the ability of individuals in our culture to perceive and enjoy the different art forms of other cultures. Our perceptions surely vary from those belonging to the people who created these art forms. We, therefore, have the capacity to experience only some aspects of the art objects of other peoples. We cannot fully appreciate the symbolic meanings which were felt and understood by their creators. We are attracted by the *intrinsic formal qualities*, and our perceptions are formed on that limited basis alone.

Although our judgments are uniquely our own, we of our century, more than any other peoples, have been able to enjoy aesthetically such varied art forms as Easter Island sculpture, African wood carving, Peruvian ceramics, Indian sandpainting, the wood carving of the Indians of the Northwest, Chinese ceramic sculpture, Renaissance painting and sculpture, as well as our own contemporary art forms. If we should, however, overlook our limitations in perceiving the art works of other peoples by assuming that the arts are universal languages, we could lose sight of the value of the arts within the unique experiences of people. We would then *separate the arts from the lives of people*.

Anthropologists show that, when we view the art works of other people from the point of view of our own value judgments, our understanding of their attitudes and motives is frequently erroneous. This is illustrated by Melville Herskovits in *Man and His Works*.<sup>7</sup> He describes a mask made by an African Yorubu tribesman. A westerner of our tradition, with a background in art criticism, responded to the unique distortion of the structural

<sup>7</sup> Melville Jean Herskovits, *Man and His Works* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1948).

form. He was attracted by the manner in which the parts of the face were composed.

Herskovits' investigations indicate that the tribesman made the mask as he did for reasons entirely different from those the westerner supposed. The tribesman's purposes were directly related to the tribal ceremony for which the mask was intended. It was to be placed in a particular position; the purpose of the distortion was to enable the mask to be seen in a certain way from the position it was to occupy. Both tribesman and westerner were able to approve the work, each to his own satisfaction, but each for his own distinct reasons. Each derived distinct and different meanings from it.

Such a difference in interpretation is in no way compatible with a theory of universal value in the arts, if it is interpreted to mean universality of visual language. If there is universality in the value of the arts, it must stem from another source.

### *Values in Artistic Behavior Suggested by the Value-Forming Process*

When we look at the arts as avenues for human action, we can better understand the value of the arts in experience and education. Man is, in part, a rational being. Through the use of language, which enables him to create and communicate ideas, he thinks, plans, acts, and reflects upon his actions. At the same time, man is also a feeling and intuitive being. It is impossible to separate his intuitive feelings from his rational and analytic thought. They interact with each other. An individual uses rational thought to explain his intuitive responses. At times—and this seems to be when man grows in understanding and comprehension—he uses his rational and reflective capacities to reorient his intuitive responses. He modifies his values, which, in turn, affect his future behavior and action.

The relationship between rational thought and intuitive response cannot be overestimated, because it is the keystone of our

framework of values and of the development of our purposes and choices for action. When we are called upon to act, our choices are dictated by our value judgments—our attitudes. Sometimes, circumstances force us to inquire into and re-examine our actions. This occurs when we are discontented with the results of our actions. We then discover wherein our attitudes are unreliable. They remain reliable just so long as our actions prove to be accurate, correct, and satisfying.

When our actions fail, or when they lead us into difficulties, we examine the situation to discover the reasons for failure. Sometimes our difficulties stem from decisions we made in selecting a particular course of action. Through reflection and analysis, we gain the necessary insight to reconstruct our intuitive attitudes, and indeed our values. This is how people learn to improve their value judgments.

This process of attitude change occurs in our daily experiences. For example, although an individual often seems to act impulsively, he does not really act thoughtlessly. His rapid and almost automatic reactions stem from assumptions and values which served him well in his previous experiences. If impulsive action in a new situation leads him to conflict and failure, his assumptions and value judgments are now inadequate to meet the new problem. He must modify his value judgments by internalizing new insights into his own attitude framework.

For example, a child at the age of nine or ten does not always understand the idea of fair play or sportsmanship. Should his team lose the baseball game because of an error in play, he will react by pouncing on his unfortunate teammate who committed the error. As a result of this action, the child is accused of poor sportsmanship. Upon re-examination of the facts, he may be forced to admit that he was hard on the player because anyone can make a mistake. In time, he will learn to become more tolerant because in the process he will discover that he is human too. Through this process, he has internalized a new insight which he incorporates into his attitudes toward others.

phrases, sentences. What is true of verbal languages is also true of visual 'languages': we match the data from the flux of visual experience with image-clichés, with stereotypes of one kind or another, according to the way we have been taught to see.

"And having matched the data of experience with our abstractions, visual or verbal, we manipulate those abstractions, with or without further reference to the data, and make systems with them. Those systems of abstractions, artifacts of the mind, when verbal, we call 'explanations,' or 'philosophies'; when visual, we call them our 'picture of the world.'"<sup>8</sup>

With our language systems and our values, we look upon the world and find correspondence between the pictures inside our heads and the world without. Whitehead indicated that we fit the world to our perceptions rather than fit our perceptions to the world. Believing these correspondences to be "real," we feel at home in what we regard as the world we know.

Human beings need the satisfaction and security of their known world. When our known world—its languages and "systems of abstractions"—is static, it forms a trap; when dynamic, it becomes a springboard for development and growth. *It is dynamic in so far as we participate in action.* At that point, *we test our values and our language systems, and we modify both of them.* This is the intimate relationship between language, values, and social experience.

Experience in the visual arts is an avenue for action. The individual has an opportunity to test his interpretation of his life experiences. He acts as he creates his own systems of abstract visual symbols. His action is a process of infusing visual materials with attitudes, feelings, and ideas to communicate them to others. In this process, the individual is able to test his interpretations and to check their validity. He offers his pictures for others to see, as if he were speaking to them; he "talks" through visual forms rather than words.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Hayakawa, "The Revision of Vision," introduction to *Language of Vision*, by Gyorgy Kepes (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1944), p. 8.



The individual participates in an active process in which the organic unity of the idea and the form is critical to the success of the action. The process of making this creative relationship is one testing ground for his judgments, values, and way of working. Here, therefore, is one of the unique values of experience in the arts in education.

### *Complexity of Value Relationships*

As has already been indicated, the modification of language, judgments, and values is a complex process. Because they are all interrelated, a discovery in one phase of our experience creates the need for reorganization of our value system. Since our values are deep-seated—so much an internal part of ourselves that they describe our personality—we are reluctant to give up any of them. We hold to them tenaciously because they have been satisfactory in the past. We prefer to ignore occasions on which these values prove inadequate.

When we give up some of our values, we do so reluctantly, slowly, unevenly, and often fearfully. We hesitate, because an individual derives the security and conviction to carry on his necessary actions through the reliability he senses in his value judgments and his value system. It is frightening, and confusing, for any of us to realize that some of our values are unsound and require revision. It is equally confusing for a child to realize that he must change his behavior because the things he has been doing have created difficulties for him and for others.

Values, therefore, are neither simply nor easily discarded. We grow out of them, and in doing so we internalize new ones. We know that this process proceeds unevenly, because the problems we encounter vary in magnitude. They exert uneven pressures on our value systems. Some changes are relatively easy to accept, while others are highly disruptive.

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placed his faith in an ideal and a belief. This is the moral man, indeed the religious man. This "outstanding characteristic of man is his capacity to sense the value in the quality of his experience."<sup>9</sup> The value attribute is an intrinsic part of human experience, and it "is a pervasive and inseparable aspect of every experience. All human wants, urges, desires, and aspiration are permeated with some value attribute."<sup>10</sup>

Sensing "value in the quality of his experience" is a *singular human characteristic*. It is derived through enjoyment in the way we experience things. We seek value in experience, as well as from the things we produce through experience. People talk about *satisfaction in work*, the pleasure that comes in *doing a job*, and the sheer joy in the process of painting. Value is *inherent in the quality of the experience*, and we realize our selves and our own potentialities in the experience.

Until recent years, this point of view was to be found largely among some philosophers. To Whitehead, "value is the word I use for the intrinsic reality of an event."<sup>11</sup> To Dewey, the "intrinsic reality of an event" is synonymous with growth. "Honesty, industry, temperance, justice, like health, wealth and learning, are not goods to be possessed as they would be if they expressed fixed ends to be attained. They are directions of change in the quality of experience. Growth itself is the only moral 'end.'"<sup>12</sup>

The expression of this point of view by a social psychologist like Cantril points toward its objective verification. We also find it expressed by Karen Horney in the field of psychiatry, when she says: ". . . that man, by his very nature and of his own accord, strives toward self-realization, and that his set of values evolves from such striving. Apparently he cannot . . . develop his full human potentialities unless he is truthful to himself; unless he is active and productive; unless he relates himself to others in a

<sup>9</sup> Hadley Cantril, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1929), p. 62.

<sup>12</sup> John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1920), p. 177.

spirit of mutuality . . . He can grow, in the true sense, only if he assumes responsibility for himself."<sup>13</sup>

The struggle for self-realization is described by Gotshalk in the field of aesthetics. "There is . . . a human impulse of a very primordial sort . . . The year-old babe who turns his head away from an over-bright light . . . or who yowls and tosses when he needs dry pants already exhibits this impulse . . . to have a perceptually satisfying environment. Now this is certainly an 'original,' natural, virile, healthy, 'rational' impulse—this impulse to adjust the environment to our perceptual satisfaction by action instead of passively accepting the environment. This impulse flowers in its purest and fullest form in the fine arts. Moreover, although this impulse operates extensively outside of the fine arts, it approaches the rationale or central purpose of the extra-artistic pursuits only as these pursuits themselves approach the nature of a fine art."<sup>14</sup>

Chapters 6 and 7 refer to the Freudian description of subconscious aspects of human behavior and personality development. At this point, however, it is necessary to indicate briefly wherein Freud's point of view differs from that regarding the intrinsic value in experience presented here. Underlying the Freudian view of behavior are basic instinctual drives which direct human purposes in action. According to Freud, social customs often deprive an individual of opportunities to satisfy his instinctual drives. He then sublimates by substituting socially acceptable courses of action. Freud recognizes value in aesthetic experience as a way toward acceptable behavior. It is a sublimation of basic drives and a substitute for "honor, power, riches, fame, and the love of women."<sup>15</sup>

Freudian interpretation to the contrary, Ralph N. Turner,

<sup>13</sup> Karen Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1950), p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> Reprinted from *Art and the Social Order* by D. W. Gotshalk, pp. 37-38, by permission of The University of Chicago Press. Copyright 1947 by The University of Chicago.

<sup>15</sup> Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1921), p. 327.

the historian, writes: "When the historian looks at the stream of generations . . . the first impression is one of meaningless diversity . . . a chaotic array of races, of people, of languages, of states and empires, of artistic forms, of beliefs, of rituals, of ways of work, of inflictions and enjoyments, and of values or goals . . . As the historian's eye penetrates the clouded past, these multiple aspects of life take form in groups of men, differing from one another . . . Finally the historian's eye discovers in these differences the supreme fact which explains and indeed justifies them, namely, human creativeness . . . The capacity of creativeness, whether it operates as trial and error, reason, emotional sensitivity, sympathy, intuition, or spiritual aspiration, is the central part of history.

"Man with the capacity of creativeness, can transform material factors and reshape goals, bring visions to reality. History is the formation and transformation of visions."<sup>16</sup> The everlasting quest for deeper and clearer vision seeks the enhancement of value in experience. History is characterized by efforts to create more harmonious relationships among material factors, people's goals, and aspirations. The quest for the enhancement of value in experience, although present in many areas of human activity, is particularly characteristic of participation in the arts.

### *Quest for Value in Experience*

The all-pervasive goal of human beings is to attain satisfaction in the quality of experience. This seems to be our destiny, and its accomplishment is the source of our greatest satisfaction. It therefore forms the obvious basis for a foundation of art education. To recognize the particular value of the arts in experience and education, we should view the arts through the perspective of some of the many different activities which seem to lead to the enhancement of value attributes in experience.

<sup>16</sup> Ralph N. Turner, "Mankind from a New Summit," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, XXXV, No. 14 (April 5, 1952), p. 9.

People have the unique capacity for deriving value through the most diverse ways. There is no single channel for its accomplishment, although the quality of the value may vary according to the activity from which it is derived. There is little doubt that each of us derives our values in our own unique ways and that some activities hold more promise for one individual than for another. It is also reasonable to assume that most of us feel the need to supplement and to expand the ways through which we derive value attributes in our experience.

"You sense the satisfying value of experience from a job well done; from helping to accomplish a community, national or humanitarian task; from having met or exceeded your own expectations or the expectations others have of you. You sense a value attribute in the exhilaration, . . ., from climbing a mountain, from a swim in the lake . . ., from a good game of tennis or golf. You feel a richness of experience as you watch your children grow and develop. You sense a high quality from the experience of helping a friend . . . You sense a value attribute in creativity whether that creativity involves baking a tasty loaf of bread, making your garden grow, raising hogs, cattle or grain, putting together a home-made radio, repairing a broken machine, painting a picture, or writing a poem or a sonata. You sense a value attribute in experience when you learn something useful for your purpose, when you make sense out of something; and you share the value attributes of a child's experience when you see his sense of satisfaction in learning to tell time, in learning to read, in learning his first simple additions. You sense value attributes in the humble, ordinary activities of life: in saying 'hello' to a neighbor, in cleaning your house, in taking a bath after a hard day's work. You sense the value attributes of disappointment, disturbance, or sorrow when things go wrong."<sup>17</sup>

The value attributes you sense are not only the things you have done or the objects you have produced. The value attributes are sensed in the experience of doing these things. Were this not

<sup>17</sup> Hadley Cantril, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.

the case, we would not recall the deep pleasures we experienced in such situations; we would not look forward to an opportunity to relive them.

For example, an elementary school teacher who attended a summer workshop described the intrinsic value she felt in the work she was doing: ". . . where in the beginning I used to wonder where in the world the next idea for painting a picture was coming from, I have become so full of pictures that I could paint literally dozens . . . In driving home tonight I saw these things that I feel I would like to express in some visual ways . . . The sun was beating down, and out in this torrid heat was a man dressed in an undershirt and faded blue overall trousers. His bronze-skinned muscles were bulging above his leather-gloved hands. He was trimming a half-dead hedge. On his head the orange colored straw hat almost lost its identity in the strong light. The drab porch of his house almost closed in the scene, because there was little yard. Closely adjoining the house was a perfectly white store front. No jetting form protected the doorway. The sun shone unmercifully upon the clapboards and the window decorations of hot green lay motionless. The only movement lay in work, in perspiration as it trickled down the body."<sup>18</sup>

To this teacher, this was more than mere subject matter for pictures. It was more than ordinary sensitivity to what she saw. It was real excitement in the *act of seeing*, in the *act of experiencing* what she did see. She continued: "In the classroom I want to help the children achieve this same kind of growing experience . . . not like mine . . . but in the sense of bigness, in the sense of rich experiencing, . . . in the sense of stepping beyond what one already knows and feels comfortable doing into new fields of exploration."<sup>19</sup> For her, the value attribute was *her way of experiencing*, which would carry into her own action as a teacher of children.

<sup>18</sup> From student papers, written toward the close of an Art Workshop for Classroom Teachers in the Elementary Schools at The Ohio State University, 1950.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

Another teacher wrote: "I came to the workshop to learn some tricks to help children in their art activities. I realize now that children do not need these tricks. Children learn to work out their own problems. They need to be led into problems created out of their experiences . . . This I learned from my own experience . . . I made some things out of different media, and it was very satisfying when I made something which was . . . symbolic of the intended object . . . It took almost three weeks for me to fully realize . . . that it is in the practice of art that the real value of the child's experience is realized. He learns the meaning of creation through exploring and testing the possibilities . . ." <sup>20</sup>

Value attributes make us feel full, exhilarated, and satisfied. They come from experiences urging us to look forward to anticipate their recurrence. They are our own private experiences. Sometimes we partake of them alone, and at other times with other people. The satisfaction we sense is felt deeply and within ourselves.

These are the kinds of experiences in the arts which prompt another teacher to write: "Much of the work was fun, some was agony and a few things were 'almost' satisfying." <sup>21</sup> Still another, upon reflection, says: "It didn't happen that day, or the next, or the next, but gradually we came to know art in a different way than we had been used to." <sup>22</sup>

This quality of satisfaction certainly is *neither superficial "fun" nor "pleasure"* in the ordinary sense of the words. Superficial fun and pleasure would hardly be compatible with the fundamental problems of the public schools to educate for sensitive and responsible living in a democratic community. Deep satisfactions in the value attributes in experience contain the inner warmth of complete *involvement* in and *responsibility* for an undertaking. They grow out of purposeful play with the materials of experience, but they are quite different from the momentary and transitory enjoyments we encounter.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*



### *Intrinsic Values in an Individual's Experience Related to Cultural Values*

People enter into experience within an environmental framework. For the most part, our choices of experiences are controlled by this framework. Often, our choices are so channeled that they lose their potential creativity and are impaired, leaving us dissatisfied.

To derive value attributes, choices of experiences must, to a degree, be harmonious with the values of the culture. Experiences which impair this relationship either minimize the value attributes for the individual or tend to modify some of the values of the culture. Cultural values prevail so long as they provide adequate avenues for individuals to achieve value attributes in their experiences. When cultural values interfere with the enhancement of value attributes in experience, people begin to deviate from culturally approved activities. When enough people begin to seek value in experiences which are not preferred culturally, changes in cultural values ultimately come about.

What is true about a culture in general is equally true about the culture in a particular school community. If activities in the life of a child at school do not provide adequate opportunities for the enhancement of his value attributes, he creates his own even if they deviate from the ordinary criteria for good behavior. Witness the rise in the number of behavior problems and the incidence of juvenile delinquency. To be sure, these are the cooperative responsibility of the community, the school, and the home. Adequate avenues for the enhancement of value attributes in experience are lacking in one or all of these. The result is serious deviation to marginal behaviors.

The variety of activities through which value attributes are secured is not only characteristic of many individuals but it also describes our collective culture, our way of life. The question is not which experiences provide the greatest value attributes to most people. The question depends rather on the way of life

in the culture, its problems of living and ways of earning a living. In a school, it depends on the kinds of studies which are considered useful. It depends on the way children are treated in the face of their difficulties, their failures, and their accomplishments. Important are the school's values in relation to the child and his product, be it his arithmetic paper, his spelling test, his painting, or his piece of craft work. Does the way of life in the school offer adequate avenues for value enhancement in the experience of the children, or does it impose serious restrictions on the participants?

People in different cultures have achieved their highest value attributes through religion, the arts, politics, or industry. Despite the fact that all peoples created art forms, art has not been the way of life for all people, nor is it so today. Collective cultural values and collective experiences for the achievement of value attributes have varied among different peoples.

Philosophy and the arts were the way of life for the citizen of ancient Greece. He certainly experienced exhilaration and satisfaction watching his children grow. He surely sensed a value attribute in physical prowess and skill. No doubt, he derived satisfaction in his experience through the humble and ordinary activities of life. But the highest value attribute, qualitatively, was experienced in philosophic and artistic pursuits. This appears to have been the life in his culture. The life of the Roman citizen was not so much his art as it was his politics. The medieval guildsman shared man's unusual capacity for sensing the value attributes in his experience through widely diverse avenues; but his highest values appeared in the spiritual fusion of his religion and his art.

How can we characterize the American way of life? Artistic experience certainly is not one of the primary values of our culture. Our deepest desires have been acquisitive, and our creative ingenuity has been applied to winning the greatest number of physical requirements for a good life. Through inventiveness and industrious skill we created the wherewithal for an immense

physical well-being; we collected the appurtenances of a good life. While this process was speedily expanding and developing, it seemed to provide sufficient value attributes through excitement and adventure. It won a frontier and developed a land enabling us to achieve the satisfactions we needed.

The risks we took and the opportunities that were open are legendary. Any man could stake out his claim, and many did. People were capable of enduring hardship, privation, and isolation for the excitement and the promise that was offered. The experience seemed valuable and meaningful in its intrinsic sense. The arts were not the way of life. They were superimposed as a veneer over the many other things which go to make a good life.

Some of the conflicting cultural attitudes toward the arts discussed in Chapter 2 stem from values that seem to be losing their strength and purpose in American life. Despite increasing evidence of purposive participation in the arts, we have not yet achieved the clarity in judgment to reject those values that hinder positive development. This value conflict affects our judgments in teaching. Attitudes toward experience in the arts, which have been generally accepted, now seem to be impeding the emergence of subjective values in creative experience. The value conflict is leading to a confusion of thought, causing much of the confusion we find in art education.

This conflict in values can be illustrated through the problem faced by any teacher in developing a curriculum in the arts. What should be the content of the program? Should it include certain media of the arts, and on what basis? Should it include certain art activities, and for what reasons?

If a teacher's purpose were to educate for acquaintance with a wide variety of art media, a program could be developed toward such a goal. If a teacher's purpose were to educate for experience with a particular group of art activities, a program could consist of such a series of selected projects. If, however, a teacher would choose to educate children to enhance the value attributes in their experience through the arts, neither of these solutions

would be satisfactory. Media and activities could no longer be viewed as ends in themselves. A variety of each would be available for individual children to select the ones which were most appropriate for their own ideas and for their own inclinations. Media of the arts would be used to discover avenues for involvement in artistic experience *rather than for their own sake*.

A curriculum based on a systematic acquaintance with a particular variety of media and activities is primarily concerned with the accumulation of skills as if they were objects to be collected. It is in conflict with the values which predicate a program of varied offerings so that children can select the appropriate avenue for personal involvement. The former seeks a quantitative collection of accomplishments, whereas the latter aims at qualitative achievement.

As teachers, we recognize the barrenness of an "artless" life. But, too often, we explain our collective "artlessness" through the poor appearance of the objects we have created and collected for use in our daily lives. We think in terms of the value placed on things and gadgets, and we fail to recognize that mere improvement in their appearance will not lead to change in our behavioral attitudes. We look forward to making all things more functional, and we commit the error of believing that "function" alone can produce aesthetic quality. We even suppose that success in making many things more "artistic" in their outward appearance will produce the artistic way of life.

The error we commit stems from some of our cultural values. Through such judgment, the aesthetic object and the aesthetic experience are relegated to a matter-of-fact existence. It precludes their subjective function in human behavior. The value attribute in aesthetic experience is subordinated to the aesthetic fact. Our attention is focused on the external object rather than on *the human experience with the object*, thereby diminishing the value of artistic activity in experience and education.

Teaching for qualitative achievement depends largely on the value judgments just discussed. It is possible to teach children

to produce designs or paintings without stressing deep subjective feelings. When this is done, the experience remains matter-of-fact. Good paintings and quality in design come from absorbed feeling and seeing, leading to fresh excitement and personal fulfillment. Good teaching aims to develop freshness in experience. *Freshness in aesthetic experience means realization of the uniqueness of the feeling, the process, and the product.*

The tendency to separate feeling from process and product results from conclusions which are only partial and bypass the crucial questions. This split is exemplified by Haggerty, who says of the emphasis on "the things that people buy rather than those they make": "This emphasis is inescapable if instruction is to tie art to the realities of life. It is made so by the character of our current economic life. While hand work still persists and while frequent efforts are made to revive the hand crafts, it is still true that few persons now make with their own hands many of the things they use. It would not be economical to do so."<sup>23</sup>

Such a point of view leads to a lack of sympathy with deeply felt experience and is an example of the confusion growing out of some of the conflicting values which have been mentioned. The value of *productive economy* is confused with the value of *behavioral experience*. The personal dislocation, stress, and maladjustment caused by overemphasis on productive efficiency is not recognized. Although productive efficiency is one of the great achievements of our culture, personal dislocation and stress, as they affect the lives of growing children, cannot be excluded from the problems of art education. The values in art education cannot be conceived in terms of "the things people buy rather than those they make," nor should they perpetuate the sentimental conflict between machine-made objects and handicrafts. The value of the arts in experience and education is its contribution to *meaningful expansive feeling in experience*.

<sup>23</sup> Melvin E. Haggerty, *Art a Way of Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1935), p. 20.

"As the crafts are transformed into production-line industries, . . . , the sense of joy . . . in accomplishment gives way to one of monotony and frustration. As in the professions the scope of each field is expanded through scientific and economic diversification, . . . , the specialist experiences a sense of atomistic detachment and futility . . . Similar anxieties manifest themselves among office workers, wives in the homes and even farmers: feelings of insecurity and social discontinuity. The fact that . . . most of these groups are well paid does not wholly mitigate these frustrations, but merely gives them the wherewithal for shallow, canned recreation with its own potential of boredom and monotony, distracting rather than re-creating."<sup>24</sup>

These are the people, and their children, for whom art education must provide. Their problem is not whether to buy things or to make them, and it is only partly the selection of the things they buy. The question is whether art education can provide an avenue they need to derive value attributes in their experience. Here is the function of the *intrinsic value of the arts in human experience*.

If education through art is to grow out of the intrinsic value of creative experience to meet the needs of children in our culture, it should stem from the sense of discovery in the lives of children. Problems of teaching should be conceived to encourage sensitive reaction to ideas, materials, and visual forms, rather than to master technical problems or to collect skills in a long list of art activities. Sensitivity grows *in the process of discovery and invention* leading to insight and desire for fresh discovery.

In one first grade, for example, several children drew pictures in which they included birds. Because the images of the birds were stereotyped, the teacher pointed out that they looked like "shorthand" birds, lacking the brightness of the people, the trees, and the houses in the pictures. With their teacher, the children talked about the many different birds they had seen. Some birds

<sup>24</sup> Stefan Hirsch, "An Appraisal of Contemporary Art Education," *College Art Journal*, X, No. 2 (Winter, 1951), pp. 151-52.

were small, and others large; some were of solid color, and others speckled; some had big bills, and others were tiny; some were of brilliant color, and others drab. Seeing birds freshly to discover their unique character became a value. The children went to work again, this time excited about the selective choices they were making. But, above all, they were excited about their *ability to discover and see* the unique character of their favorite bird. Their excitement and fulfillment came from seeing, feeling, painting, and understanding, welded into a meaningful experience.

### *Challenge and Value of Artistic Experience in Our Culture*

The value of the arts in experience and education lies primarily in the intrinsic excitement and rich perception derived from its process of action. The ability to perceive clearly and to incorporate perceptions into organic visual form leads to personal fulfillment and self-realization. Self-realization develops as the individual is able to identify himself with the incidents he perceives and interprets through artistic form. If this is the primary value of experience in the arts, it behooves art education to make it a primary purpose.

Here, then, is the problem for education in the arts, as suggested in Chapter 2. In some cultures, art was a way of life, because the values in artistic experience coincided with the primary values which were held by the culture. We are witnessing an opposite situation. Our culture seems to emphasize negative values regarding the arts, and yet artistic experience promises experiential values to individuals in the culture.

We can readily see that art education cannot solve the basic problems of value in the arts *by distorting artistic experience to meet some of the negative values of the culture*. Teachers can deal with problems by becoming sensitive to the conflict in values. They would then be better able to examine their teaching methods in relation to the values engendered. Teachers who do so

are finding that qualities in artistic experience hold promise for emerging values in the culture. This is apparent through the therapeutic advantages the arts provide. As teachers, however, we must be concerned with value in experience in the arts as it transcends therapeutic potentialities. If the arts offer value in therapy, if they provide an avenue for the alleviation of maladjustment, it is only reasonable to assume that they provide a needed value in human experience.

Teachers who are concerned with the general education of children center their attention on the potentialities of the arts for healthy and creative development. The field of art education needs to direct its energies toward the encouragement of internal satisfaction through the process of artistic experience.

Our task, therefore, is not a simple one to be easily demonstrated through direct cause and effect. It is complex, and any effort to oversimplify it only tends to weaken it. "Esthetic sensitiveness and enjoyment are a large constituent in any worthy happiness. But the esthetic appreciation which is totally separated from the renewal of spirit, from re-creation of mind and purification of emotion is a weak and sickly thing, destined to speedy death from starvation. That the renewal and re-creation come unconsciously not by set intention but makes them the more genuine."<sup>25</sup>

Although the creative process is elusive, it is one we must respect. Without knowing it, we cannot hope to create learning situations to encourage children to enter into artistic experience for the satisfaction they need. To recognize how the arts contribute their value to experience and education, we now need to examine the artistic process itself.

### *Summary*

It would be inadequate to base a program of art education on a selection of values taken from the artistic experience of people

<sup>25</sup> John Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. 180.



in other cultures. Our reasons for working in the arts are our own. They are most productive when they grow out of the way we live and the way we educate children to learn to live in our culture.

Historically, art education has modified its value orientation as the changing needs of life in our culture became apparent. Because values in the culture are changing, teachers, when using the arts, can best fulfill their educational role by teaching the arts in terms of the emerging need for personally meaningful experiences.

Values are formed in the process of "making sense" out of our personal and collective existence. They are descriptive of all we consider worth while. We change our values when we are disappointed in unsuccessful actions based on judgments we assumed to be worth while. Our ultimate purpose is always to increase the value increment from the things we do. Our values and our actions are, therefore, inseparable.

Our actions stem from our capacity to think, to communicate, and to feel. We act through our communications to others—the things we say to and about other people. Because the arts are communication media, they are vehicles for action through which values are formed.

The organic unity of aesthetic form and artistic action provides value satisfaction. The intrinsic value in the artistic act is the kind of satisfaction that people are seeking. The current quest for moral and spiritual values comes from recognizing some of the inadequacies in our mechanized society. Healthy people need the personal identification which the arts allow. The fact that values are changing suggests that some values are in conflict. Teachers should reject the distorted overemphasis on "practical" values. Children need to be educated to know how to find the deep satisfactions in personal security.

To derive the potential value from experience in the arts requires insight into the nature of the creative process.

When we tend to ignore the implications of value and purpose in an undertaking, the process often degenerates into a mere method. We overlook many of the central issues because we then treat problems superficially. Educationally, we teach in terms of "a method" without recognizing its effects on general behavior. *Method is only one aspect of any process.*

Good teaching helps children in developing sound, purposeful behavior. The art products they make and the way they manipulate materials and ideas need to be harmonious with what we know about the nature of the creative process. In the visual arts, this process encompasses the procedures in making an art object through the actions of seeing, feeling, and organizing. These become the sources from which an individual develops sensitivity to his own experience. At the same time, these are the sources for his own awareness in relation to his art product. Teachers who have insight into the nature of the creative process develop teaching methods for dealing with all these factors.

### *Importance of Process for Art Education*

The public schools are charged with the responsibility for mass education. A long period of educational experience is a significant part of the lives of all children. They come into contact with bodies of knowledge in the physical and social sciences, the humanities, the arts in general, and the visual arts in particular. The forms these contacts take—the processes through which children participate in these areas of human experience—determine the degree of success of our educational institutions in developing an intelligent and creative citizenry. Success in achieving this goal depends on the provision of adequate opportunities for children and youth to achieve satisfaction in the value attributes of their experience. A creative citizenry needs adequate avenues in its quest for self-realization.

Because our culture patterns are dominated by conflicting values, the nature of process is vital to all educational experiences,

especially in the field of art education. The values of the arts lie in the potentialities they afford in the quest for value attributes in experience. Experience through the arts offers satisfaction and fulfillment through aesthetic perception. Value attributes are discovered in experience to the degree that a person is able to function through the process of the experience.

Process cannot be experienced simply by making something with art materials, nor can it be achieved merely by knowing information about the arts. Basic to process is the involvement of the individual. This is expressed through his behavior and conduct as he works with art materials and assimilates knowledge about the arts. "The business of the educator—whether parent or teacher—is to see to it that the greatest possible number of ideas acquired by children and youth are acquired in such a vital way that they become moving ideas, motive forces in the guidance of conduct."<sup>1</sup> Under such circumstances artistic experience is internalized into our behavior to become a way of life.

Creative process is a manifestation of human behavior. The particular modes of conduct which can be characterized as creative stem from studies of individuals for the purpose of learning how they manage and relate themselves to things, people, and ideas in their environment. The child who creates a meaningful visual image in his painting does so because of his ability to relate himself in terms of the things he sees, the ideas he has heard about these same things, and the materials he uses to give aesthetic form to his own ideas.

In effect, such behavior is called creative because it is interpretive. The individual interprets through his own eyes and his own feelings. In doing so he creates a new form. Essentially, creative process is a dynamic relationship through which an individual is engaged in putting together objects and ideas that are outside himself. He manipulates and organizes them in relation to his own sensitivity and understanding.

<sup>1</sup>John Dewey, *Moral Principles in Education* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1909), p. 2.

A teacher who has insight into the way children relate themselves to ideas, people, and objects can involve them in the creative process through experience in the arts. In a teaching situation, for example, both the teacher and the children contribute their ideas, abilities, purposes, and values. Both have an accumulation of past experiences which causes them to look at and interpret the particular situation in their own ways. Materials for their use are available to all of them. These include the space and furniture in the room, their books, the ideas they contain, as well as the art materials with which they can work. All are available within the immediate confines of the classroom.

The encouragement of creative participation by children requires, in part, a teacher's awareness of their potential abilities for manipulating all that is available within the reach of their classroom. It depends on the teacher's ability to present what is available in such a way that children can manipulate things *in relation to themselves*. Then they have the opportunity to interpret and reshape these things. In such a situation, creative action is encouraged since there is an understanding of the creative process.

### *Some Basic Concepts for Understanding the Creative Process*

Understanding the creative process requires the knowledge that is available to us from philosophy and aesthetics as well as from the branches of psychology. There are important sources for such information in studies of the experiences of creative individuals, and in fields of inquiry concerned with the dynamics of human behavior.

Psychological investigations into the sensory capacities of human beings—sensitivity to touch, movement, color, light, taste, odor, and sound—are useful. But they are useful only in describing the raw equipment of the human organism to absorb stimuli from its environment. Creative experience involves more than having and using one's physical equipment to receive environ-

mental stimuli. Creativity involves not only physical reaction to stimuli, but also the individual's active psychological response.

The concerns of education through art in terms of the creative process go far beyond questions about sensory acuity. The fields of both psychology and biology have presented evidence of the wide variety in individual capacities to receive sensory stimuli. These differences, however, hardly go so far as to describe the behavior of talented people, let alone the creative experience of "normal" individuals. Such evidence does not offer us the kind of explanation of human behavior we need. It fails to explain why individuals respond to certain situations and not to others. It does not indicate how individuals relate themselves to outside events in order to make them a part of themselves. It does not explain how individuals interact with objects, ideas, and people in working and learning situations.

Most contemporary psychologists believe that our personal values and attitudes operate to determine the way we respond to things we see. Studies in social psychology show that we often maintain our prejudicial attitudes in spite of the information we apparently hear and see. We frequently do not "notice" the information our sensory apparatus brings us. Our attitudes and values stand between our inner selves and the "information" we encounter in experience. We have difficulty in relating the information to our selves.

The Gestalt psychologists expanded our understanding of the problem. They emphasize the inadequacy of measuring a person's separate sensory capacities. Their great contribution is the concept that the "wholeness" of an individual's behavior within any given situation comprises more than the sum of all the separate parts. They point to the phenomenon of insight, whereby the fragments of an experience seem to fall into an understandable position. Through insight, the individual creates new elements related to the problem, the lack of which retards his understanding. In doing so, he creates a *pattern* of the separate parts to make a meaningful *whole*.

For example, the child who is trying to draw a hill in the distance never learns to carry through his task by adding together the separate bits of information about the hill and about light, shade, and shape in a picture. He needs to identify himself with the hill to see himself in relationship to the hill. He needs to be aware of the point of view he must assume in order to make the hill look far away. This enables him to create a whole image by bringing together the information he has about the hill and his drawing materials. The significant part of the pictorial image is the point of view he created, that aspect of the problem to which he gave of himself in order to organize the separate elements into a unified whole.

Sociologists and students of child development have contributed the concept of the "self" to help us understand the phenomenon of self-awareness. The "self" of a person emerges as the individual becomes aware of himself through his behavior in relation to others. The moment an infant is separated from its mother's body, it begins to realize and to grow aware of the identity of its own "self." Learning takes place within the matrix of social interaction. Through the development of interpersonal awareness, a child begins to sense and know himself.

Awareness of one's self is a basic prerequisite for the ability to identify one's self with the ideas, people, and events encountered in experience. Knowing one's self and the point of view one assumes is critical to sympathetic insight and creativity. The ability to identify himself and the point of view he was taking was essential to the child who was trying to draw the faraway hill. His identification of self made it possible for him to create the unified image.

Psychoanalysts and psychiatrists have also helped us to understand how we perceive our world. Individuals *reconstruct what they see* through their own creative action. Inner drives, wishes, and aspirations are so powerful that they demand expression. In order to control some of our desires we unconsciously camouflage them. Psychoanalysts contend that human sensory capacities are

in no way mechanical. Human beings modify, reconstruct, and even reject some sensory stimuli they *actually* see, hear, and feel. Subconsciously, they are selective in their experience according to their inner values and purposes. *They are not always consciously aware of these purposes.* Consequently, they are not always aware of the creative transformations they make.

" . . . It was psycho-analysis that succeeded in proving that there was always at the root of the little mistakes of human beings—such as forgetfulness, losing things, various accidents, errors in reading, etc.,—some purposive desire. Previously, these occurrences had been explained . . . as the result of lack of attention, of fatigue or mere accident. Through psycho-analytic investigation . . . it was established that, generally speaking, we forget nothing except what we wish to forget for some good reason or other, a reason which may, however, be unknown to ourselves."<sup>2</sup>

On the surface, it may now appear that the information we derive from sociology and child development is contradictory to that which comes to us from psychoanalysis and psychiatry. Superficially, it would seem that an individual cannot be aware of himself at the same time as he is unconscious of some of his actions. Rather than being contradictory, these two sources of information supplement each other to indicate the multidimensional aspects of human behavior.

We are aware of our selves, but we also act for subconscious reasons. Many of our ideas are subconsciously generated. We are most creative in putting them into coherent and unified form when the parts of a task are "seen in focus" so that we realize our selves in relation to the total operation.

Laboratory demonstrations developed by Adelbert Ames, Jr.,<sup>3</sup> show how human beings "see" things in the way they are pre-

<sup>2</sup> Anna Freud, *Psycho-Analysis for Teachers and Parents* (New York: Emerson Books, Inc., 1935), pp. 22-23.

<sup>3</sup> The Visual Demonstration Laboratory was developed by Adelbert Ames, Jr., at The Hanover Institute Division of the Institute for Associated Research. Similar and identical equipment at Princeton University and The Ohio State University is available for study and research.

pared to see them. We interpret things according to the meaning we customarily attribute to them. We "know" the events we have experienced through the particular courses of action we have followed. Certain things assume special significance, and we interpret them accordingly.

We see things *through* our past experience. Our past experience determines our "readiness" and our "point of view" from which *we create our interpretations*. For the active developing individual, a point of view is always temporary; it is always contingent upon ongoing active experience. When we act, we often encounter problems and we recognize things we never saw before. Such discoveries cause us to shift our point of view. We create a modified point of view—new readiness, modified assumptions, modified values—for experience yet to be encountered.

This is how we form our perceptions, and our perceptions are intimately related to the way we develop, use, and test our values in action. The things we "see" are those that have been meaningful in our past experience. We share meanings with others only to the extent that our own experiences have been harmonious with theirs. Otherwise, we fail to notice the same qualities which others recognize.

The Ames laboratory demonstration of this phenomenon provides some of the necessary information for an adequate understanding of creativity in human behavior. In the demonstration called the "size-distance table," we can see the relative size and the apparent importance an object assumes in an individual's consciousness.

The observer uses an apparatus which separates the field of vision of his left eye from the field of vision of his right eye; he is thus forced to look at a separate image with each eye. Through his left eye, the observer sees several signposts that are set out to measure the distance in feet from front to back; through his right eye, he sees a rectangular card. At the observer's side is a hand crank which, when turned, causes the rectangular card to grow larger or smaller. The rectangular card is produced with a



lantern slide projector which can be used to project a playing card, a calling card, or even a billboard sign card. First, the observer is requested to name the particular card that is being projected at the moment. Then he is asked to turn the crank in order to make the card larger or smaller until he makes it the "right" size, in other words, until the particular card stands at the "right" distance according to the foot markers he sees through his other eye.

Several things occur as the observer follows these instructions. He turns the crank to make the size of the card correspond with what he knows it to be. He of course "knows" its size because of his prior experience with it. He "feels" certain that he is placing it beside the "right" foot marker to show its proper distance from him. But the point in space where he places the card does not correspond with the distances on the foot markers. The correspondence of point in space, size, and distance is in his own experience. The observer *interprets* the size of the card and its distance from him according to its meaning in his personal experience.

This same phenomenon can be witnessed among young children at work in the arts. When a youngster paints the figure of a person almost as large as a house, he interprets its *meaningful size relationship*. Through pictorial representation, he creates an image showing the relative importance he "sees" in people and houses.

Children constantly create *interpretive size relationships*. For example, they often make a flower huge in comparison to the person who is holding it. In drawing a picture of a person, they *might make one hand immense and the other hand almost imperceptible*, because the immense hand is performing the crucial part of the action they are illustrating. We can, therefore, say that children's pictures have "interpretive reality." But it is erroneous to say that children exaggerate. To exaggerate is to overstate a truth. Children do not overstate; rather they create size relationships which are "real" to them. Paintings lacking objective

proportion and seemingly distorted in size relationships are a child's clear statements of his psychological identification with objects, events, and other people.

The examples just given point to still another important piece of information that is particularly pertinent to creative action with the materials of the visual arts. Size relationships are among the basic elements of visual language symbols. One of the most potent ways of expressing emphasis or importance by the use of visual forms is through manipulation of the size relationships among the objects in a painting. All artists manipulate the size relationships of the objects in their paintings to convey particular sensations and ideas. A mature artist's creation surely differs from the work of children in some very important respects because of his intellectual orientation to his work. Yet he too reveals his own psychological identification through the way he interprets the size relationships among the components of his painting.

Relationships between past experience, meaning, action, and modification of point of view help to show how interpretations from past experience are tested and re-formed in current action. The Ames laboratory demonstrations provide some necessary explanations for a better understanding of how we see, how we act, and the meanings we attribute to our current experiences. They suggest ways through which human beings reconstruct meanings. They demonstrate basic characteristics of the process through which people *"create" the meanings of the things they see and do.*

As we proceed to examine some of the components of the creative process, it is important to recognize that creative experience is neither limited to professional artists nor to those who have an abundance of talent. Creativity is a universal human characteristic. Teachers who deal with education through the arts are concerned with aspects of the creative process that are characteristic of all men's behavior. Many of these characteristics are developed and intensified through creative experience in the arts. For this reason they are important to the arts in general education.

The five sections that follow contain psychological and philosophical descriptions of aspects of the creative process. They deal with the creative process as imitation, imagination and intuition, interaction, intuitive-intellectual interaction, and the subconscious aspects of the creative process. From the positive contributions as well as the limitations contained in these several points of view regarding the creative process, we shall be able to determine those components which need to be incorporated into a foundation for art education. They will be interpreted in terms of their implications for teaching procedures.

### *Creative Process as Imitation*

It is useful to look back at the point of view of the English empirical philosophers of the seventeenth century. As they saw it, the creative individual is a receiver of sensory impressions from his environment. Through the common human capacities for seeing, hearing, and touching, an individual receives stimuli from his environment and he stores them in his mind. An individual's acts of expression reflect these stimuli. They are not reconstructed. Expression stems directly from the original sensation, and it varies only in so far as the sensation itself loses some of its original vitality.

"Imagination, therefore, is nothing but *decaying sense* . . ." <sup>4</sup> According to this view, sensations fade with the passage of time. They are only partially *recaptured* by means of imagination and memory. "This *decaying sense*, when we would express the thing itself, . . . we call *Imagination* . . . but when we would express the *decay*, and signifie that the Sense is fading, old, and past, it is called *Memory*. So that *Imagination* and *Memory* are but one thing, which for divers considerations hath divers names." <sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Ed. 1651, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

According to this interpretation, sensory impressions create the mental images which in turn become our ideas. The individual records, remembers, and, in effect, stores these impressions in his mind. When he thinks, he recalls the impressions, but he does not modify them. The person is merely an instrument through which these impressions flow.

This point of view overemphasizes the importance of external objects and events to the exclusion of the individual's subjective reaction. It leaves no room for personal interpretation because it does not recognize the individual's identification with events in his environment so that he can make them a part of himself. This interpretation became the philosophical foundation of the art academy. "Academic realism" was based on the belief that the things we see are independent of our experiences with them. It assumed that our experience has no effect on our interpretations of the objects and events we encounter.

This concept of creativity can also be seen through some of the work in experimental psychology. The theory of frequency and recency of stimuli as developed by Watson, the psychologist, provides no more opportunity than did Hobbes for an individual to reorganize the external sensations he receives from his environment. According to Watson, learning and an individual's expression of his learnings depend on the frequency and the recency of the events he encounters. The attitudes an individual derives from his experience do not seemingly affect his reactions. In this sense, Watson's explanation was similar to Hobbes' "imagination and memory are but one thing."

The psychologist Thorndike advanced a step further. He demonstrated the important effect of pleasure and pain on the learning process as well as the process of expression. According to Thorndike, feelings of pleasure and pain function as motivations. They can assist or impede learning. The individual's mind, however, is still conceived as a depository where impressions from the environment are recorded. He recognizes certain associations among his impressions; these are formed into bonded relation-

ships so that a certain stimulus will elicit a particular response. Thorndike's explanation has become known as the S-R Bond theory of learning.

Although Thorndike recognized the selective power of subjective pleasure and pain, these were valued for their function as devices. Essentially, combinations of certain stimuli and certain responses became fixed and stored in an individual's "mind." According to this view, the role of a teacher is to motivate students through pleasurable stimuli. Then they will form combinations which will produce sound responses. By repetition, these combinations become firmly established in an individual's mind.

The behavior theories as conceived by Watson and Thorndike imply a mechanical process in creativity. They encourage imitation because they offer no explanation for invention and all that we understand about creative action. They do not recognize the elements of discovery and reconstruction in the creative process through which an individual selectively re-forms all the stimuli he receives through his environmental experiences. We can readily see how these theories of learning fail to offer any promise for art education as well as the arts in general. Yet, if we were to examine some of the current teaching in the arts, we would be forced to admit that many teachers still determine their teaching methods on the basis of these theories.

Some teaching in art education is still seeking to establish certain responses in terms of certain principles of organization. These principles are often examined as separate entities. Teachers assign repetitive exercises, and they expect their students to form certain "good" responses to certain stimuli. Although the subject matter contained in these exercises is not always handled "imitatively," such teaching still encourages processes of working so that the learning taking place is imitative in character. Teachers who work in such ways undoubtedly believe that an individual's responses can be "fixed" because they are relatively static. They assume that "proper" responses can be established through the repetition of certain stimulus-response combinations.

There are many teaching methods that illustrate such assumptions. For example, some teachers introduce their students to painting through a study of color theory. They request their students to make color wheels so that they can work out the primary, secondary, complementary, and analogous color combinations. Often the students are required to paint pictures while using these precise combinations. The teacher assumes, and the students are taught to expect, that these will produce good color.

It may be true that reference to color theory can be helpful to discover useful information about the potentialities for mixing colors. To assume, however, that such reference can be used as the basis for determining "good" color combinations is erroneous. The facts of mixing colors may be remembered, although their effect on sensitive judgment will remain negligible. Misguided emphasis on color theory can actually retard the development of effective use of color.

Another example is the common procedure of teaching students a "method" for drawing figures through the use of sticks or ovals. There is no doubt that a group of flowing lines or ovoid shapes can be helpful in laying out the position and shape of a human figure. The ability to draw figures, however, does not stem from using the lines or the shapes. Learning this "trick" may help students to recognize this particular combination, but it does not help them to learn how to see and understand the figure they are trying to draw. As a result, such methods place misguided reliance on the combination of tricks rather than on the understanding.

Procedures such as these are still in use at all educational levels. We find them presented not only to elementary and secondary school children, but to university students as well. Many prospective teachers are taught these methods so that they in turn can miseducate their own children. These methods stem from mechanistic conceptions of learning. They deal with limited responses to fragmentary stimuli. They are contrary to the nature of the creative process.

### *Creative Process as Imagination and Intuition*

In contrast to theories explaining creativity in terms of imitation, there are others, dating back to the idealist philosophy of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, which suggest quite a different character for the creative process. Idealist philosophy emphasizes the importance of the individual rather than the power of external stimuli. Individuals control the stimuli they encounter; they interpret and reconstruct them according to the imaginative meanings they give to them.

In a discussion of how the "mind" creates true realism, Coleridge writes: "that the object which it [the mind] beholds or presents to itself, is the real and very object."<sup>6</sup> According to this view, an individual perceives the "reality" of the things he sees in terms of the way he interprets them. Reality is created by an individual through his own imaginative capacities. "The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception . . . The secondary Imagination I consider as echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its energy, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead."<sup>7</sup>

Through the imaginative capacity of an individual, objects which are ordinarily "fixed and dead" become re-created into an ideal unified form, a unity that is aesthetically conceived. From Coleridge's point of view, the essential meanings of the stimuli from external objects are derived through the way an individual perceives them. This means that every stimulus is flexible because its meanings are formed by the individual as he "imagines" them

<sup>6</sup> Samuel T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (New York: E. P. Dutton Co., 1930), p. 141.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 159-60.

to be. If this point of view is accepted as the basis, the creative process can in no way be imitative. It would be entirely imaginative because people create their own meanings and hence their own images of reality.

Although Coleridge attributes imaginative power to the creative process, he does not suggest how an individual forms his imaginative perceptions. There remains the question of the way in which the creative process flows. How does an individual operate in the creative process, and how does he control and re-construct the stimuli he receives from external objects? Coleridge's point of view assumes a human mind which is at once intellectual and emotional; he attributes to it the sole source of energy. He does not describe for us how this energy comes forth. Coleridge attributes so much strength to an individual's imaginative power that he leaves no room for interaction in experience.

Such a subjective interpretation of the creative process is further elaborated by the philosopher Benedetto Croce. He holds that aesthetic form is intuitive. According to Croce, intuition is at once expression and art. The human mind in consciousness transforms an art material intuitively to give it aesthetic form. Like Coleridge, Croce believes that art is imaginative; its essential character is lyrical unity. The artist conceives the image in his mind; he gives it form and expresses the image in his mind. The act of expression is inseparable from the artist's intuition. If he cannot express the intuition, it does not exist. Croce uses the word intuition to describe a conscious mental process. Intuition is identical with the act of expression even before the individual gives it shape in terms of art materials. Aesthetic form is intuitively conceived without the use of an art material.

Since, according to Croce, aesthetic expression is intuitive, the creative process would be wholly and entirely a function of the human mind. "To have an intuition is to express. It is nothing else (nothing more, but nothing less) than to express."<sup>8</sup> The

<sup>8</sup> Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1909), p. 25.



embodiment of an aesthetic expression in an art material is a secondary process for the sole purpose of recording and communicating it to others. This phase has no bearing on the process of intuitive creation itself.

Were we to accept Croce's description of the creative process, the character of art materials would play no part in it. If the intuition grows and is expressed in the artist's mind, he has no need for art materials through which to give it form. The aesthetic form would literally be seen in the "mind's eye." If, according to Croce, intuition and expression are one and the same and if the intuitive imaginative image is complete in the artist's mind, he need not work with an art material should he not care to record it. Were this so, there would be no opportunity to develop and reconstruct human values and purposes. Because, as has been indicated in Chapter 5, values and purposes, although subjective, are tested for their validity and are clarified and reconstructed in the arena of social action. The effect of an individual's action on people and objects outside himself are as stimulating to his imaginative capacity as are the intuitive formings within his own mind. In fact, he depends on this stimulation to generate his own ingenuity. The significance of values and purposes is realized and understood in an action process. This is where it is either reinforced or modified. Expression externalizes and projects inner feelings. It is an integral part of the forming process and includes the manipulation of an art material.

As a description of the creative process, Croce's theory has been reflected in the field of art criticism by Clive Bell. In this way it has been echoed in the area of art education. Emphasis on intuitive and inspired subjectivism has had, and still has, a strong influence on art education. Its limitations do not allow for the social matrix in which individuals express themselves in order to develop and grow. Nor do they provide an explanation of the judgment an individual exercises and the struggle he experiences when he tries to give organically unified shape to an art material.

Although Croce does not provide us with an adequate description of the creative process, teachers should recognize the valuable contribution in his emphasis on the intuitive capacity of the individual. As we proceed, we will be able to see the importance of this aspect. The theory as a whole, however, is limited for the purpose of teachers. It fails to include an explanation of an individual's social awareness and responsibility, a characteristic common to all people.

### *Creative Process as Interaction*

In contrast to Croce, another philosopher, Samuel Alexander, emphasizes the interaction between the artist and his material in the creative process. According to Alexander, "Art proceeds from specific aesthetic excitement in the artist, and produces an aesthetic excitement or emotion in the spectator or hearer."<sup>9</sup> The aesthetic emotion is composed of two elements: the "passion appropriate to the subject," and the "passion proper to the artist." The "passion," excitement, and interest of the artist in his quest for aesthetic form is stimulated by the subject and the idea of his choice. In this manner, mental images are called forth by the subject; this precedes the physical work of the artist with his materials.

According to Alexander, aesthetic excitement grows from the natural impulse to construct things when this impulse turns contemplative—when it becomes deliberate and thoughtful in the quest for unified and organized construction. "By saying that we have the aesthetic impulse and the aesthetic emotion or excitement when constructiveness becomes contemplative, I mean that we have it when the artificer uses the materials of his construction not for a practical purpose but for their own sakes."<sup>10</sup> Such effort to construct aesthetic unity brings forth organized words in litera-

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Alexander, *Philosophical and Literary Pieces* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1939; New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc.), p. 234.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

ture, related sounds in music, and structural forms in the visual arts. The aesthetic excitement removes words and forms from their narrow literal meaning to stimulate continued constructive activity with them. The individual experiences delight and pleasure as he is in the process of manipulating his materials. The meanings are inherent in the action itself because they become apparent as the individual succeeds in bringing his constructed forms into a coherently organized relationship. In this way aesthetic construction creates a fresh reality. Through elements of illusion, the individual gives character to his art materials. At the same time, he creates the reality of his artistic work.

Alexander points out that ". . . in the beautiful object the significance is supplied in part from the artist's mind,"<sup>11</sup> and artists anticipate their finished works through their imagination. He cautions us, however, not to misinterpret what he is saying. He does not mean that the procedure of constructing a work of art through the use of an art material does not play an active role in the creative process. On the contrary, Alexander goes on to add that "The essence of the work of art is that in it creative mind and the material are indissolubly fused. That this fusion is the meeting of two separate beings, the man who creates and the material which receives from him its form, is indeed vital to the artistic situation . . ." <sup>12</sup>

According to Alexander, a work of art is an individual's expression of aesthetic excitement in which he is responding to a chosen subject. The expression of excitement about a subject generates the creative experience, and the process of expression develops through the medium of a material that is appropriate to the subject the artist has selected. "And not only does the subject choose its material, but the material chooses and modifies the images and the artist finds himself compelled by his material to fresh and alerted imagination."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259.

<sup>13</sup> Samuel Alexander, *Art and Material* (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1925), p. 30.

One of Alexander's primary differences with Croce is found in his contention that the artist can have no developed image of his art product. The image in his mind is only tentative until it is embodied in a material. *The product is revealed as it is "wrung" from the material in the process of construction.* "The poem is not the translation of the poet's state of mind, for he does not know till he has said it either what he wants to say or how he shall say it."<sup>14</sup> Mental images are the servants that feed the constructive impulse. They find their way into expression, but they are not the images of the artistic product. They are not merely translated into a material. Mental images *interact* with a material to form a unique relationship.

The art work, in the process of construction, and the individual's excitement about the subject with his concomitant mental images are organic parts of the creative process. As the process evolves, through *interaction among the artist, his subject, and his material*, it calls forth images in the artist's mind which he transforms through the material. The subject perceived by the artist elicits subconscious thoughts and feelings which enter the process to feed the art object he is constructing. The artist responds to the subject with aesthetic excitement.

Mental images as such are formless. They take on aesthetic form only as they are embodied in an expressive material. *Artistic images assume form and reality only as we put them to work, as we act with them, and as we strive to embody them in an art medium.* Images are not transposed onto a material. When an image is merged with a material or, in Alexander's word, as it is "wrung" from a material, it emerges in a new form which is a discovery for the artist himself. In the creative process in the arts *new forms are revealed* in the same way that new values are revealed in the process of social action. Through manipulation, the art medium offers aesthetic excitement; it encourages development and growth in the imagery. According to Alex-

<sup>14</sup> Samuel Alexander, *Beauty and Other Forms of Value* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1933), p. 59.

ander, interaction *with* a material, the embodiment of an image *in* a material, and the revelation of the form *through* a material form the essence of the creative process.

The elements of the creative process, as presented by Alexander, are critical to the development of teaching methods that seek to encourage creative behavior on the part of children. Therefore, to insist on complete preplanning, to require adherence to static principles, to ignore the quality of the idea that elicits the excitement, to emphasize the material without exploring its appropriateness to the idea, to be concerned with a particular kind of design structure without testing its relevance to the idea and the material—all these would contradict characteristics of the creative process.

The relationship between the artist and his material can be readily affirmed by all of us who have worked in the arts. We feel this as we work with a material, and we sense how it imposes some of its own characteristics upon our work. As we manipulate the material to put it into the shape of our idea, it forces us into new paths. We discover new facets of the idea we were so sure we clearly saw.

The relationship between external material (stimulus) and internal image (idea) can, in part, be demonstrated by results obtained in Adelbert Ames' Visual Demonstration Laboratory. In one demonstration, three parallel lines of diminishing size are projected onto a black wall so that they are clearly seen as a two-dimensional image on a flat surface. When the observer is asked to name these lines "telephone poles," he immediately forms a new mental image. He knows that all telephone poles are about the same height. From past experience he also knows that when telephone poles appear to be diminishing in size, they must be receding into three-dimensional space. The mental image of telephone poles, coming from his past experience, merges with the visual stimulus of the material in the form of the lines projected onto the flat wall. The diminishing lines together with the mental image cause the observer to "see" them as telephone poles receding in

space. In this laboratory demonstration, all observers report that they see *three-dimensional poles in perspective*. Some even claim that they see a roadway and wires. The way a mental image merges with a material in the form of lines to create a "picture" is, hereby, demonstrated objectively in the laboratory.

Alexander's explanation of the creative process can be highly productive for the purpose of evaluating teaching procedures which might be either positive or negative in their effect on the encouragement of creative experience. He differentiates between external stimulus in the forms of subject and material and internal idea in the form of mental image. He describes characteristics of the creative process through which these merge into aesthetic form. He shows the importance of subconsciously felt attitudes and feelings while emphasizing the transaction between the artist—his attitudes and ideas—and the art medium. Alexander clarifies the value attribute in artistic experience through his explanation of contemplative construction. His distinction between the contemplative, as opposed to the practical, gives further meaning to the inherent value of experience in the arts as discussed in Chapter 5.

The characteristics of the creative process to which Alexander points suggest specific guides for the action of teachers if they are to help children to work creatively through the arts. Should a teacher overemphasize the importance of the external subject matter, the art material, or the child's internal image of his subject, he would be thwarting the child's creative experience. Creative process is the interaction among these three elements. In order to be able to interact, each of these elements must be encouraged to affect each other and indeed to change according to their influence on one another. Any rigidity in the form of premature preconceptions is contrary to the creative process.

The interpretation of a subject is clarified *in the process of work*. The most appropriate use of a material is discovered *as it is used* in forming the interpretation of the subject. The aesthetic form itself evolves *as the individual constructs it*. A painting, in

short, becomes an aesthetic form as it is being painted rather than when it is determined in advance of the act of execution.

To encourage such a process, teachers need to lead children toward the satisfaction they can discover in *contemplative play* with ideas and materials. Children can then search out the multiple possibilities in order to discover the appropriate relationships that make for a unified structure. Such contemplative play requires an indeterminate amount of time. The time will surely vary according to the age level of the child, the intensity of his interest, and the particular activity in process. These are the determinants that matter. Artificial allocations of time created by the teacher may prove to be superficially efficient. They get jobs done, but usually at the expense of the quality of the experience and the quality of the learning.

Although Alexander's description of the creative process is very useful, there are questions that are still left unanswered. He speaks of the impulse of constructiveness, but he does not give it the clarity that teachers of the arts require. He calls it a feeling of directed suspense and adds ". . . but what it is the indication of, what hidden movings urge us forward into the customary outlets of words or other forms of artistic material, is not disclosed until we have in semiblindness achieved the desired product."<sup>15</sup> To discover more about the subjective aspects of the creative process we need to turn to the philosophy of John Dewey.

### *Creative Process as Intuitive-Intellectual Interaction*

In his writing on aesthetics, Dewey builds on the contributions of Alexander as well as of some of the idealist philosophers. With these, he creates a new synthesis to describe the creative process. According to Dewey, creative experience is a purposive interacting process. He further clarifies some of the characteristics of the creative act so that they can be effectively applied to the problems of teaching children through the arts.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

Dewey takes some psychologists and philosophers to task for suggesting that feelings and sensations are "mere elements of knowledge." "The senses are the organs through which the live creature participates directly in the ongoings of the world about him."<sup>16</sup> Through sensations, an individual gains awareness of his world. Participation in experience, however, is not solely the action of the senses. "It cannot be opposed to 'intellect,' for mind is the means by which participation is rendered fruitful through sense; by which meanings and values are extracted, retained, and put to further service in the intercourse of the live creature with his surroundings."<sup>17</sup>

Sensations become meaningful to us through intellectual awareness. We accept the stimuli from our surroundings, and we reconstruct them to suit our purpose as we participate in our ongoing experience. According to Dewey, sensory intelligence enables an individual to transcend his simple sense reactions so that he may participate with conscious meaning and expression. Dewey emphasizes that perception is more than mere recognition; visual perception, for example, includes more than the light-ray stimulus from a particular object.

Perception is the embodiment of meanings derived from an individual's prior experience. Meanings are re-created in present ongoing experience and retained for future sensory reception. Perception involves personal meanings and values which are as potent in the artistic process as they are in the social process. *The characteristics of human perception form the common ground between aesthetic and social experience.*

The individual is constantly interacting with all that he encounters in his experience. He receives sense impulses from external objects and events as he participates in these events. In this way, he reconstructs his interpretations and accumulates new ones. This process is consistent with the character of value for-

<sup>16</sup> John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Minton, Balch & Co., 1934), p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.



mation as discussed in Chapter 5. The participant in the arts, through self-identification, conveys his own meanings and has meanings conveyed to him.

The arts "come to man through a direct appeal to sense and sensuous imagination."<sup>18</sup> Reason includes imagination and imaginative intuition. Dewey concludes that the imaginative individual "accepts life and experience in all its uncertainty, mystery, doubt, and half-knowledge and turns that experience upon itself to deepen and intensify its own qualities—to imagination and art."<sup>19</sup>

The sensitive individual does more than receive, select, and attribute meanings to all with which he interacts in his surrounding world. Individuals are *intuitively* selective beyond the limits of intellect and reason. For Dewey, intellect includes intuitive, imaginative selection. He describes the individual as meeting his environment with energy and conviction of his own.

In any act of expression, an individual *projects himself through a medium*. "The connection between a medium and the act of expression is intrinsic."<sup>20</sup> The medium through which an individual acts and the material in which he works is an integral part of the creative process. Intuitions, sensations, and ideas are embodied in the material. According to Dewey, a work of art is "*expressed*" from a material. Expression is a process of interaction between the creative individual and a material. The material demands recognition of its own strength and character. In the process of expression, the resistance of the material and the action upon it by the creative individual produces the aesthetic form.

Dewey hereby incorporates Alexander's emphasis on the role of the medium in the creative process. "The act of expression that constitutes a work of art is a construction in time, not an instantaneous emission. And this statement signifies a great deal more than that it takes time for the painter to transfer his imaginative conception to canvas and for the sculptor to complete the chipping of marble. It means that the expression of the self

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

in and through a medium, constituting the work of art, is itself a prolonged interaction of something issuing from the self with objective conditions, a process in which both of these acquire a form and order they did not at first possess."<sup>21</sup>

The art work is not a preconceived image in the artist's mind. His imaginative conception is an important element in the process. Above all, it is the entry into the heart of the process, but it is not the act of expression in its totality. The intuitive and imaginative individual *acts with a material*. The action is reciprocal because it is fed by imagery, while at the same time the material resists and encourages further imagery. This in no way minimizes the importance of an individual's intuitive sensibility, but it does charge him with the responsibility for accepting the function of the medium in the creative process. He can do only what the material will permit him to do.

Dewey's description of the creative process adds further clarity to the subconscious and intuitive aspects of creative action. "When excitement about subject matter goes deep, it stirs up a store of attitudes and meanings derived from prior experience. As they are aroused into activity they become conscious thoughts and emotions, emotionalized ideas."<sup>22</sup> We become consciously aware of these meanings when we put them to work in the active process of artistic expression. Subconscious attitudes, derived from prior experience, affect our action. They are vital elements in the creative process. Their presence can be documented both in the laboratory and in psychoanalytic research.

As we carry out our purposes in the process of expression, and as we reflect on the problems we encounter, we grow into increased sensitive awareness. This is partially a result of the emergence of subconscious attitudes into consciousness. We enhance our sensitivity as we participate, as we act, and as our subconsciously held feelings interact with current stimuli.

The function of the subconscious is important in still another respect. According to Dewey, subconscious pressures also precede

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

the act of expression. Images are subconsciously generated and developed to serve the demands of a particular act of expression. "New ideas come leisurely yet promptly to consciousness only when work has previously been done in forming the right doors by which they may gain entrance. Subconscious maturation precedes creative production in every line of human endeavor . . . When patience has done its perfect work, the man is taken possession of by the appropriate muse and speaks and sings as some god dictates."<sup>23</sup>

Through Dewey's description of the creative process, we can see the functioning of many of its important and interrelated elements. Understanding of these elements can contribute to better teaching. They explain the role of the subconscious aspects of behavior, the nature of perception in artistic experience, and the purposive imaginative expression by an individual that gives aesthetic form to an art material. A very important question, however, needs further exploration. We need to know more about what Dewey calls "subconscious maturation."

### *Subconscious Aspects of the Creative Process*

Some philosophers have recognized that many of our desires, aspirations, judgments, and choices are subconsciously determined. Psychologists and psychoanalysts have formulated concepts to clarify the nature of the subconscious. Brand Blanchard, the psychologist-philosopher, uses the concept of the "apperceptive mass" to describe how individuals make judgments on the basis of the totality of their accumulated past experience. Stimuli that come to an individual are perceived through this apperceptive mass. This often occurs without conscious awareness. Meanings are consciously realized as day-to-day events filter through the subconscious pattern that shapes an individual's responses. This explanation is harmonious with the role of internalized past experience as shown by Adelbert Ames in the Visual Demonstration Laboratory.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

In speaking about the "subconscious in invention," Blanchard refers to biographical information about such creative thinkers as Coleridge, Goethe, Mill, Spencer, Poincaré, and Russell. He explains how a creative individual works: he suggests that there are two interacting phases in the creative process. He calls one the primary self and the other the secondary self. According to Blanchard, an individual who acts creatively deals with problems through these two phases. That aspect of problem solving which is fully conscious is related to the primary self; that which is felt below the level of consciousness is related to the secondary self. Art is "a construction in which the secondary self is guided by a conscious and explicit design."<sup>24</sup> "This way of dividing the labor, the conscious self supplying the scheme, the subconscious the development, can be exemplified almost endlessly from the practice and precepts of creators in the arts."<sup>25</sup>

Blanchard's analysis helps us in understanding the subconscious aspects of the creative process. In some respects, it appears reminiscent of the subconscious that Sigmund Freud describes, but the differences need to be clearly recognized. The Freudian subconscious is the inner wellspring of basic human desires, needs, and aspirations, whereas the subconscious that Blanchard talks about is the accumulation of inner feelings toward outer problems and events.

Freud more than anyone else established the significance of subconscious sources of behavior—his contention that an individual's actions stem more from his subconscious motivations than they do from the immediate events and circumstances he encounters in his daily life experiences. Individuals create the meaning of and even tend to distort the events they encounter according to their subconscious motivations.

A teacher's realization of the potency of the subconscious as a storehouse of desires, drives, repressed disappointments, and

<sup>24</sup> Brand Blanchard, *The Nature of Thought* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1941), Vol. II, p. 188.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

failures is of inestimable value in understanding behavior. It is as important for a teacher who seeks to understand the process of creative striving as it is for awareness of the causes for maladjustment. Psychoanalytic concepts and techniques for analyzing the subconscious levels of thought hold promise for further investigation of their function in the creative process.

While continued study is necessary for greater precision and clarity in understanding the subconscious aspects of the creative process, one fact appears certain. Subconscious motivation and maturation are essential components of the creative process. Teachers, in developing procedures, are obliged to honor and to allow for the presence of important subconscious aspects in the behavior of children.

For example, teachers should not expect children to learn what is merely told to them or even demonstrated for them. A teacher should never be misled into believing that a child has learned something when the only available evidence is the child's repetition of what has been said or shown. Real learning involves internal acceptance by the learner, and one never really accepts anything that may appear to be in conflict with his inner feelings. Whether things are in conflict or not can only be judged from the action of the learner. His behavior is the only reliable basis for judgment and not the hopes or desires of a teacher, however meritorious they may be.

The development of creative ingenuity and aesthetic sensitivity must begin *at the learner's level of maturity*. When teachers begin at that level, they accept the learner with sympathy and understanding. They have neither the need nor the desire to show their own dissatisfaction with the learner's immaturity. A child may appear to be listening because he knows that he is supposed to listen to his teacher. But he will not learn, in the true sense of the word, if he is taught something which is beyond his own level of maturity. This is an imposition on him because it is beyond him. It generates conflict and makes it impossible for him to accept what is being taught as a part of himself.

To illustrate: A little girl in a third-grade class burst into tears when the teacher distributed finger paints and encouraged the children to participate freely. This little girl's mother was a fastidious person. The child's home experience caused her to abhor the slightest disorganization. Finger paint on her hands revolted her.

No amount of talk and encouragement could have helped. On the contrary, encouragement would only have frustrated her all the more. At the time when the incident occurred, the teacher had no information about the child's home background. She did not wait to get it. Instead she accepted the child's reaction and neither questioned nor criticized it. She allowed her to escape from the intolerable situation by saying, "We all don't have to work with finger paint. You may choose something else." With this comment, the teacher insured the child's trust and confidence.

Another relevant illustration, but one of quite another sort, occurred when an elementary school teacher remarked: "The boys and girls in my class enjoy making drawings when I tell them what to draw." This teacher should know that such enjoyment is superficial and transitory. Such a procedure does not challenge the children, nor does it provide any value increment in their experience. It is pleasant and easy, but it does not elicit awareness of their own inner attitudes. As a result, it does not lead to expanded understanding and sensitivity.

Teachers can challenge children in a sympathetic manner with confidence in their potential abilities. They can help children to find the most appropriate ways to experience the values of creative participation in the arts. To do this, they need to make specific application of the knowledge they have about the creative process in general to the creative process in the visual arts in particular.

### *Creative Process in the Visual Arts*

The nature of the creative process is not peculiar to the arts alone. It is intensified through experience in the arts, but it is

also evident in the many forms of human behavior where individuals enjoy some *freedom of movement, some measure of choice, and some demanding situations to work through*. In such a process, individuals realize themselves in the quest to enhance the value attributes in their experience.

Education through art can provide such experience. This is the value that increasing numbers of individuals in our culture are beginning to derive from it. As an avenue for direct action, it demands the responsibility and disciplined behavior through which a person can derive his full measure of deep satisfaction from this process.

The creative process does not aim to create "beauty" in the ordinary sense. At times, the concept of beauty has been used to define a full and satisfying relationship. Beauty, in the usual sense, is only a secondary by-product of the value and purpose of creative experience. Fulfillment and self-realization are the central purposes of the individual who is absorbed in action with an art medium. He strives to embody his ideas, feelings, and insights into expressive visual form. The coherent and unified form he creates appears beautiful to the observer. Its unified coherence stems from the integration of the individual's ideas and insights in terms of the art medium. This *process of integrating* is the essence of creativity in the visual arts. It is the basis for the invention of meaningful aesthetic form.

Creativity is action by an individual through a medium. There are many avenues in human experience for creative action, but they vary according to the potentialities and the character of the particular media they offer. Media vary according to their relative resiliency, which in turn determines the potentialities they offer for self-fulfillment and personal satisfaction. A medium which is so rigid that an individual is unable to manage and interact with it offers limited possibilities for creative action and personal satisfaction. The energy demanded by a rigid material drains so much of the individual's attention that he is unable to attend to the other aspects of the creative process. He is so busy with

the mechanics of the medium that he is unable to sense the relationships between his own inner attitudes toward his subject and the medium itself.

For example, transparent watercolor paint, in cakes, is a relatively rigid medium. It is very difficult for children to get a full brush of such color. When the color is once placed on the paper, it is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to modify and yet maintain a clean color. To manage such a medium requires great skill and experience. When offered to young children, it is too demanding; it seriously limits their capacity to interact with it.

There are many media in all phases of human experience that offer potentialities for creative interaction. Individuals can participate creatively when they become involved in a group undertaking, when they go about their daily business interacting with situations they encounter, or when they work with visual art materials. The differences lie primarily in the *degree of qualitative control the individual is able to exercise and the potentialities of the medium to take on refined and integrated relationships*.

Some media, more than others, can be better encompassed and brought into relationship by an individual. Through the media of the arts, an individual can effectively sense his strength and his capacities. This is one of the unique qualities of the artistic experience. Art media are both *resistant* and *resilient*. They respond to an individual's impressions, but, at the same time, they offer sufficient resistance to play their role in the creative process by challenging him. The media of the visual arts vary sufficiently in respect to their relative resiliency that they offer unusually wide opportunities for individuals of varying developmental and experiential capacities. When a teacher is sensitive to this aspect of the creative process, he is able to choose those media that offer the maximum potentialities for the particular individual.

An individual who participates in the creative process interacts with his idea and his medium. He reaches new levels of awareness in the process because his interaction causes both idea and



medium to develop into new and unforeseen forms. This requires flexibility in the way the individual holds to his original idea. It affects the degree to which he can creatively plan and pre-determine his action. In the visual arts, the creative process hinges on the degree of flexibility exhibited by the individual as he strives to bring his mental image and his physical material into harmonious relationship.

To illustrate: A student at the college level was sensitively and intelligently working on a task. He was constructing a wire sculpture not only so that the wire would maintain its linear quality but also so that it would describe the volume of the form in space. The student wanted to make a large horse rearing on its hind legs. He planned to use some very heavy wire. This was his idea, his mental image. Since the problem was complex, in view of the nature of his material, his subject, and his idea, the student first made a small preliminary sketch with lightweight malleable wire. It worked. He succeeded in transcending the literal "ordinariness" of an outline. The sculpture was alive with the volume of the form, but it was rather flimsy. He attributed this flimsiness to the sketchy material and proceeded to execute his plan in heavy, rigid wire.

The student enlarged his sketch, bringing it into the size and scale of the new material. It did not work. The form was full, but floppy. It did not hold, and he was discouraged. "My plan isn't any good, because, if it were, it would work." He was ready to discard the piece in disgust. "Is it wrong to plan? Shouldn't a plan be carried out? Wouldn't it work if the plan were well conceived?" He questioned and thought. Soon he began to recognize that he was now working in a different material from what he had in his preliminary sketch. Now the sketch was the idea that had to be re-created in the new material of the heavy, rigid wire. When he previously tried to make a mechanical enlargement of his sketch, he, in effect, destroyed the usefulness of his plan. It was not useful because he had failed to modify it and so yield it to the demand of the new material.

With this understanding, he took up the job again and allowed it to flow with renewed energy. The solution came but not from any improvement in technical facility. It worked when he *allowed his plan to merge with the material*; when the material assumed a form which he was willing to integrate into his plan. He achieved the satisfaction we always hope to observe in our students. Needless to say, the wire horse was strong, exciting, and full with volume.

The uniqueness of the creative process in the visual arts stems, to a large extent, from the *resilient, formable, and constructible* materials with which it deals. The individual *can act with materials to organize them into forms* which convey personal and social meanings, thus acquiring the qualities of a language. As language, they are vehicles for social action through which internally felt ideas, purposes, and values are expressed. As communications, the aesthetic forms elicit reactions both from the artist himself and from other people.

The fact that an individual exercises a high degree of personal control in the creative process imposes personal and social responsibility on his creative action. Although his actions are primarily individual and completely private, they are continuously reflected back to him through his social references and by his social milieu.

### *Creative Process and Education Through the Arts*

The nature of behavior in the creative process carries important implications for a foundation for art education. The creative individual's conscious action is accompanied and often generated by subconscious thought processes. In some of its aspects, the creative process is deeply buried within the internal self of the individual. The part of the process which operates internally cannot be seen, but some of it can be inferred from the relevant observable behavior of the individual. A teacher who is able to elicit the expression of inner feelings and who can

encourage a child's interaction with art materials to build them into aesthetic form can understand aspects of a child's behavior that stem from internal and unobservable sources. Although subjective, the process of creative participation through the arts is, in part, characterized by particular overt and observable behaviors in the action of an individual.

Whatever information we have about the creative process points to the fact that it is reciprocal and interactional in character. When involved in the process, internal feelings affect the way we manage external events and materials. The things we do overtly to shape the form of these events and materials, in turn, influence our inner feelings. The influences exerted on our feelings are manifested and become observable *through the way we act to manage ourselves in relation to the things outside ourselves*. The process is organically alive. Feelings, actions, and materials are modified and reconstructed.

For example, a junior high school youngster expressed the desire to do a painting of a city street with tall buildings. He began to work. His teacher immediately observed that the boy's buildings were "cold." They were well drawn but mechanical. They did not communicate the personality of the youngster in relation to the buildings. The teacher talked to the boy to elicit his feelings about a city street. As they talked, the boy acquired the freedom to express his reaction to a narrow city street. It was oppressive and engulfing. He said, "When I walk down that street I feel like I'm in a canyon."

The teacher suggested that he make the buildings tell his story. He also suggested a few ways for managing the materials so that the boy could try out his idea to see how it looked. The boy went to work again on a new picture. He tested his idea as he tried it in the material. He painted and repainted. As he looked at the painting with his teacher, new ideas occurred to him. He could put people in his picture. Tiny people, at the foot of towering buildings, would make the street look more engulfing. His mental image and his idea grew. It gave him renewed in-

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terest and motivation to struggle with the painting to redo parts of it, to modify some of the forms and colors in order to make it better. Making it better meant to use the paints to communicate his new idea.

This teacher performed his teaching function on the basis of his observation of the overt behavior of the boy at the various stages in the process. By interpreting the boy's overt behavior, at the beginning, he was able to infer that the boy was repressing his own feelings toward the subject he selected. In this case, the first task the teacher assigned himself was to help free the youngster from the control of the buildings outside himself so that he could become responsive to his own inner attitudes toward them.

As the teacher succeeded in this effort, he was able to lead the boy toward contemplative play with his idea and his picture to expand both of them into a new aesthetic form. The teacher observed what the boy did. He inferred the boy's lack of security in his own feelings to put them into his work. He helped him gain the freedom to work in terms of his inner feelings. He thereby helped the boy to accept the disciplined demands both of his feelings and of the nature of the material in which he was attempting to embody them. In short, he led the boy into the process of creative action.

Any effort to deal with the components of the creative process is inadequate if it fails to encompass the subconscious elements of an individual's subjective feelings toward the idea with which he is working. Separation of these elements, even for worthy purposes of simplicity, can only distort the process. The organic and inseparable internal-external interaction is fundamental to its nature. The internal components of the creative process, although elusive, are affirmed through studying the behavior of creative individuals. Teachers, therefore, need to take them into account in order to educate children to act creatively.

The nature of the subjective aspects of the creative process needs to be incorporated into the theory and teaching methods of art education. Perceptive awareness, with recognition that per-

ception is active—that it merges past into present experience—needs to be incorporated into our teaching practices. Educational procedures need to honor the validity of these intangible elements by taking them into account, even though they must be inferred from the more obvious and observable aspects of behavior. To ignore them because they need to be interpreted would, in effect, deny their very existence. Without their recognition art education and education generally cannot avoid degeneration into meaningless methodology.

"Whoever is unable to see in every activity of the mind the unconscious element, whoever recognizes no region outside of consciousness as belonging to the self, will be wholly unable to comprehend either how the intelligent activity of the self forgets itself in its product or how the artist can become completely lost in his work. For such a person, who ignores the unconscious aspect of the self, there exists no creative activity but ordinary moral activity; and such a person is incapable of seeing how necessity and freedom can be unified in the act of creation."<sup>20</sup>

An individual receives maximum value through experiences in the arts when the quality of his performance is judged in relation to his own capacities and his own level of development. The value increment derived is greater when the individual is judged according to his own potentialities rather than when he is compared to external standards. The fulfillment of personal potentialities is self-generating because it leads to continuously expansive development. The striving toward external and competitive standards, in turn, leads to conformity and ultimately to rigidity.

The quality of an individual's performance depends on his own needs and his own potentialities in terms of the level of achievement that can be fulfilling and satisfying *for him*. Levels of achievement are relative to the capacities and needs of individuals rather than to absolute standards. In general education, we are more concerned with the values derived by individuals in

<sup>20</sup> Josiah Royce, *Lectures on Modern Idealism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919), pp. 120-21.

their experience than with an objective level of achievement. The role of a teacher is to challenge the enhancement of quality and value in the experience of the individuals we teach. This, in fact, is our educational obligation. When quality is measured against external and absolute standards, it does not encourage the enhancement of the value of expressive experience in the lives of these individuals.

As teachers, we need not doubt the positive aspirations of growing children; nor should we fear the adulteration of artistic quality. We all know how people derive a sense of achievement, a sense of forming, and a sense of satisfaction through wholesome participation in a community sing or a square dance. The experience provides a value for them as persons. This is their purpose for entering the activity, and very few of them ever aspire to professionalism. They seem to acquire such aspirations only when someone in the culture imposes a professional and a narrow practical interpretation on their activity—when competitive achievement is substituted for self-generating satisfaction.

Participation in the creative process through the visual arts is rewarding. It offers most promising opportunities for individuals *to extend a portion of themselves into an organically unified structure*. This extension is the essence of the aesthetic experience. The creative process is natural and singularly human. Creativity is not reserved for artistic activity alone. It functions in all human activity when people seek to move beyond the limitations of the present moment and toward their forward aspirations. In the arts, creativity is of particular quality because it can emphasize and bring into the sharpest focus *the value of experience as a process*. This is the level at which an individual discovers the enhancement he is searching for in the value attributes of his way of living.

Culturally, we too often limit our efforts to the quest for functional, practical, or monetary values from our experience. As a result, we frequently fail to fulfill some of our basic human needs. Through such impositions, our culture has closed many



avenues to deeply felt quality in human experience. To reopen them continually is, therefore, one of the primary obligations of programs in art education. If the creative process functions through the needs and purposes of individuals, teachers should recognize its relationship to the perceptual development of the growing child. We need to distinguish between his own inner purposes and those purposes which some of our cultural values have apparently imposed upon him.

The inner purposes of an individual stem only in part from his biological nature. His purposes assume their particular form through his interaction, as a rational and intuitive being, with his social-physical environment. The fact that new ideas, inventions, and social relationships create new problems obliges us to recognize wherein these new problems impinge on human goals and aspirations. To see the creative process as it functions in the lives of children so that we can educate toward the growth that is needed, we should seek further insight into the development of personality and self.

### *Summary*

The concept of process is fundamental to problems in teaching. It simultaneously embraces answers to questions as to both how and why we do certain things. In the visual arts, process encompasses the reciprocal actions of seeing, feeling, and organizing. An individual has feelings about the things he sees, and they affect his actions as he strives to organize visual art materials into aesthetic form.

Creative process is characterized by the degree to which an individual relates himself and his inner feelings to objects, people, and events outside himself. Through this relationship new aesthetic forms are created. Understanding the creative process requires more than mere information about people's sensory capacities. Individuals perceive relationships, create unified meanings, and develop awareness of their own selves in ways that are

basic. These ways help us to understand the functions of the components of the creative process.

The creative process has been described as imitation, imagination and intuition, interaction, and as intuitive-intellectual interaction. From these descriptions are derived the components which are both harmonious with other available information about human behavior in general and activity in the arts in particular. An individual acts through a medium in order to participate creatively in the visual arts. Involved in the process are his mental images derived from his feelings toward and his past experiences with the subject of his choice. His subconscious attitudes are as important to the process as are his conscious realizations.

The process is reciprocal because his mental images and the materials with which he works both become modified in form as he strives to organize them into aesthetic wholeness. The materials affect his action, and he, in turn, grows aware of subconscious attitudes which he previously did not realize.

The arts offer unusual opportunities for educational development because of the nature of the visual art media. They are concrete. They are also sufficiently varied in their resiliency to make it possible for individuals at all age levels as well as at all experience levels to find the particular medium that can best respond to their efforts.

To help children to develop their creative potentialities, teachers need to lead them into the reciprocal process of dealing with their feelings, ideas, and materials. Children need help in selecting media that are appropriate for their ideas and their manipulative capacities. Above all, they need the encouragement, security, and responsible freedom to grow aware of themselves in relation to things outside themselves.

In order to be able to give such help to children, teachers require insight into the nature of the process and the character of artistic media. It is equally important for teachers to have the ability to interpret and infer from the child's overt behavior what his inner feelings are.

## 7

# Personality Development and Creative Experience

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**C**REATIVE experience is an intimate aspect of personality development. When an individual experiences something creatively, he absorbs what he experiences to make it a part of himself. In this way, the creative experience is internalized into the individual's own personality.

When we work in the arts, we not only absorb the coherent meanings we have embodied in our artistic products, but we also offer them to others to share. In doing this, we enhance our own ability to internalize the ideas and feelings embodied in the art products of others. This ability to share artistic expressions with others underlies the relationship between education in the arts and the growth of personality. What is generally referred to as appreciation is an intimate part of the creative experience of an individual. In appreciating the work of others we internalize those ideas of other people that have meaning to us. The ideas we thus absorb re-create our own personality structure.

### *Creative Experience, Behavior, and Personality*

Expressive action is an accompaniment of creative experience; it is an avenue through which we internalize feelings, sensations,

and insights. Our actions with artistic media not only express the feelings and insights we hold, but they also help us absorb the sensations and meanings which our artistic constructions bring into focus. In the process of creative experience, we absorb meanings from the art objects we construct. For example, a youngster, while painting a picture, derives as much learning and growth from looking at and evaluating his own picture as he does from the act of painting it. He internalizes the total experience and thereby modifies his outlook and readiness for future experiences.

Creative experience is simultaneously self-expressive and self-reflective. The personality of the individual grows through the reciprocal relationship between these two elements. It develops through the quality of action which creative experience makes possible. This is why personality development is becoming one of the major concerns of teachers who help children to work creatively in the arts.

Human beings have the singular capacity to derive value from a wide range of their experiences, but all kinds of experiences do not have equal potentialities for value fulfillment through personal expression. Activity in the arts deals with some of the most promising expressive media through which an individual can derive value in his experience. The potentialities of the visual arts, in this respect, are unique in several ways.

First, they provide rich opportunities for the manipulation of ideas and materials to be organized into aesthetic forms. Through the manipulation of symbolic visual forms, responsiveness and sensitivity are encouraged within the individual. Second, the physical characteristics of visual art materials are such that they at once resist and respond to an individual's efforts. They are resilient and malleable enough to be shaped; they are sufficiently resistant to offer a challenge. Third, the nature of activity in the visual arts provides an individual with a high degree of personal choice and control. The degree of control is unusually high when compared to other value experiences in which an individual can become involved.

of those potentialities of the individual that are determined by his inherited tendencies. Although the character of a personality assumes increasingly fixed proportions as the individual matures, it continuously modifies itself and is open to potential modification. A personality is changeable, but the degree of potential change seems to diminish with age.

The role of past experience in an individual's processes of action helps us recognize some of the forces that operate in shaping a personality. We can better understand some of the truth as well as the limitation in the old proverb, "you can't teach an old dog new tricks." Some psychologists refer to this phenomenon with terms like "attitude," "set," and "selective attention." In a more specific sense in relation to learning, this is what teachers partially refer to with the concept of "readiness."

"Readiness" suggests at least two critical factors. One is physical "readiness"—physical maturity to carry through a task in order to participate in a situation. The other is psychological "readiness." Psychological "readiness" depends on an individual's past experience and his emotional attitudes; its sources are far more complex than physiological ability alone. The concept "readiness" helps us to understand the meaning of the term personality.

The psychologist Gordon Allport suggests this definition: "Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psycho-physical systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment."<sup>1</sup> Personality is the individual's characteristic pattern of interpreting events for the purpose of acting in terms of them. His personality is his particular "readiness" to act.

Hadley Cantril suggests that "The standard of value for each person is determined by his particular biological and life history."<sup>2</sup> He goes on to say that "an individual will develop in his

<sup>1</sup> Gordon W. Allport, *Personality* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1937), p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Hadley Cantril, *The 'Why' of Man's Experience* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1950), p. 34.

particular way depending on *his* particular abilities and temperamental traits *within* the directional framework provided by his participation in a particular social context." Allport and Cantril both emphasize the "physical," the "biological," the "psychic," and the "life history" in the development of a personality.

It should be noted that there is some disagreement among students in the various behavior sciences about the relative importance of cultural and psychobiological influences. For example, Arnold L. Gesell and Frances L. Ilg<sup>3</sup> tend to lay greater emphasis on biological influences, while Ralph Linton<sup>4</sup> places far more on cultural and environmental factors. But most psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists would surely agree with Clyde Kluckhohn and Henry A. Murray that: "The personality of an individual is the product of inherited dispositions and environmental experiences. These experiences occur within the field of his physical, biological and social environment, all of which are modified by the culture of his group."<sup>5</sup>

This point of general agreement is of utmost significance to all teachers. It means that an individual's personality develops *through processes of interaction between the unique biological organism and the unique environmental conditions that his culture provides for him.*

Education is one potent instrument that a culture uses to influence and shape the development of an individual. Education in general, then, and art education in particular play a significant role in guiding the growth and development of the children who are being taught. Education through the arts is a promising cultural instrument which can assist children to take part fully in the enhancement of the value attributes in their experience. The degree to which teachers can do this and so help children to

<sup>3</sup> Arnold L. Gesell and Frances L. Ilg, *Infant and Child in the Culture of Today* (New York: Harper & Bros.), 1943.

<sup>4</sup> Ralph Linton, *The Cultural Background of Personality* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., Inc.), 1945.

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develop through experience in the arts depends, in part, on a teacher's insight into factors affecting personality development. Teachers can help children to grow toward their maximum potentialities through the ways they guide them to *become involved in active learning*.

### *Two Important Concepts in Personality Theory*

When we consider some of the many influences on personality development, it is helpful to keep in mind two important concepts derived from personality theory: the concepts of "role" and of "self." They are useful for understanding the meaning of the term personality.

All people assume certain roles; they act in a particular way toward each other. The role one individual assumes toward another indicates the relationship between himself and the other. The ways in which individuals act are, therefore, determined *both* by themselves and by others. For example, a child who is respected and feels he is wanted knows he is being understood and consequently acts with confidence and consideration. On the other hand, a child who feels that he is being treated as though he could not be trusted grows uncomfortable and insecure. Ultimately, he resorts to subterfuge in his behavior. Adults play their roles in a similar manner. Arrogance on the part of one induces irritation in another. The exhibition of a persistent kind of behavior by one individual causes others to expect it to continue, and they act toward the individual as if it will continue.

All children and adults play particular roles in the various social situations of which they are a part. An individual's role is only partially created by himself, because, in part, it is assigned to him by the others in the situation. His personality assumes some of the characteristics of the role that is ascribed to him. In order to adjust to any group, he behaves, to a degree, according to what others expect of him. Individuals always seek a steady relationship between themselves and others.



The particular role that an individual assumes stems partially from himself. He has his own inheritance, history, needs, desires, and aspirations. The problem that each individual needs to solve continually is the creation of a role for himself which is both sufficiently satisfying for his own needs and desires and adequately harmonious with the expectations of the group. His role is his overt behavior as he acts in relation to others. His needs, desires, and aspirations are rooted in and stem from his inner "self."

Each individual has his own estimate of himself, his self-image. He views his own behavior and the behavior of others through his self-image—his self-awareness, his consciousness of himself, what he is, how he thinks he appears to others.

An individual's role in a social group and his self-image are never independent of each other. His role is his behavior in relation to others; his self-image is his own inner and private estimate of himself. Social role and personal self-image are not always harmonious, but they constantly affect each other. Taken together, they characterize an individual's personality.

The "role" and "self" of a child, like those of all individuals, are dynamic because they interact with each other in all situations. One of the functions of any educational process is to help children in creating roles for themselves which at once satisfy their own needs and reflect the needs of others. Success in reaching such an achievement enables people to feel secure in themselves and confident in their relationships with others.

One of the primary functions of education through the arts is to encourage children to assume the kind of action role through which they can put their inner feelings into meaningful and expressive form. Teachers can create an environment in their classrooms to encourage the security and confidence of children. Children can then discover the freedom to reveal their feelings so that they will grow intelligently aware of them in the process. Inner feelings are revealed as children grow aware of themselves in relation to the ideas they are seeking to embody in their visual art work.

The interaction of an individual's social role and inner self is the wellspring for creative experience in the arts. At the same time, both role and self are influenced by such experience. To see how these two elements operate to form a personality, it is necessary to refer in some detail to the fundamental contributions to personality theory by George H. Mead and Sigmund Freud.

### *Personality and Social Interaction*

An individual's personality, as described by George H. Mead, grows within a social milieu. It develops in the process of social action and through an individual's awareness of his own past action. "The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity . . ." <sup>6</sup>

An individual is able to reflect upon his actions in relation to others. In this way, he becomes "an object to himself." He grows socially aware to the degree that he is able to see himself objectively—as others see him. ". . . he becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitudes of other individuals toward himself within a social environment or context of experience and behavior in which both he and they are involved." <sup>7</sup>

People interact with each other through the use of media of communication. An individual's communications are social actions which he performs by expressing himself through language. When a person makes a gesture or comment, he evokes a response from those who see or hear him. It is *in the responses from others* that the meaning of the individual's original comment is clarified. The exchange of comment and response is the avenue for social interaction; communication through the use of language initiates and elicits social interaction. In this process, the individual achieves awareness of himself. When he speaks, he assumes a

<sup>6</sup> Reprinted from *Mind, Self, and Society* by George Herbert Mead, p. 135, by permission of The University of Chicago Press. Copyright 1934 by The University of Chicago.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

role in relation to others. Their responses make him increasingly aware of his own self.

According to Mead, the young child, as he plays, assumes a number of different roles, first taking the role of one character and then of another. He speaks in the role of one character and responds in the manner of another. The attitude he expresses when he is taking one role calls forth his response in terms of the appropriate role of the other. This process of role playing develops into a game where the child no longer acts as a "character" but freely assumes the roles of any others involved in the common activity. In doing so he takes on the role of the "generalized other"—he internalizes the roles of other people—and he assumes the position and point of view of the group. This enables him to judge his own actions in terms of his social group. He comes to identify himself with the welfare of others, and he becomes able to speak for the group. Through his ability to assume the role of the "generalized other," he grows increasingly aware of his own self.

"What goes to make up the organized self is the organization of attitudes which are common to the group. A person is a personality because he belongs to a community, because he takes over the institutions of that community into his own conduct."<sup>8</sup> Through this process the individual grows conscious of himself. His self emerges through his efforts to communicate and to participate in the process of social interaction.

There are four aspects of Mead's conception of personality development which appear particularly important for art education. First, an individual communicates to other people, and he also receives communications from others. His personality plays a dual role of actor and recipient; he expresses, but he also listens and sees. Second, communication is the process of social interaction through which an individual's personality develops. Through organized visual, verbal, and gesture symbols, the individual conveys his attitudes, feelings, and ideas to others; his

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

communications elicit responses from others. Third, this process of social interaction is continuous; the personality of the individual changes, and it is potentially open to change through social experience. Fourth, an individual's personality develops because he is able to become aware both of himself and of others around him.

The significance of Mead's description of personality development lies in the fact that it enables us to understand a child better as he communicates through the visual symbols he creates with an art medium. The child communicates to other people through his expressive acts. He forms his value judgments; he internalizes his experience through his actions; and he reconstructs his value judgments as he reflects on the communications from others. This is the child when he acts meaningfully, artistically, creatively. He not only creates a communicable art object; he also re-creates himself.

Personality is dynamic. While an individual acts, he re-creates a part of himself, he forms a modified self—he is the self in the creative process. Through the creative process he enhances his own sensitivity toward others, and he develops a keener awareness of himself. He matures in his aspirations and in his capacities to realize his full potentialities.

The function of communication in personality development is of fundamental importance to art education. Experience in the arts deals with the communicative media of the visual arts. It enables an individual to manipulate and shape these visual media and to invest them with his ideas and purposes through the organization of aesthetic forms. The meanings in these forms are communicated to others, and the individual's personality develops in this process of social interaction. The process of social communication not only enables the individual to express his own meanings but it also makes it possible for him to receive meanings from others and share meanings with them. He learns to appreciate the communications of others, and he thereby enhances his own personal and social sensitivity.

### *Internal Dynamics and Personality*

The two preceding chapters emphasized the significance of subconscious attitudes and values. Subconscious processes occur deep within the inner being of every person. To understand the development of a personality, teachers need to have a working awareness of the subconscious aspects of an individual's behavior. Teachers who help children to work in the arts are concerned with the expression of inner feelings. Insight into the inner personality through an understanding of the dynamics of behavior is an essential tool for effective teaching.

The role of subconscious processes was recognized by George Mead, but only to a limited extent. We therefore need to turn to the work of Sigmund Freud, who penetrated the barriers to the subconscious.<sup>9</sup> Freud's fundamental concepts about subconscious aspects of behavior enhance our insight into the dynamics of personality development.

Mead's basic principle of personality development is the internalization of the reactions we receive from other people as we communicate and interact with them. In contrast, Freud contends that a personality develops through the interaction of two fundamental tendencies. He describes these two tendencies as the pleasure principle and the reality principle. The pleasure principle is deeply embedded within the human organism. The reality principle has its source in the external world and is absorbed into the personality.

The pleasure principle governs the individual's inner drives for satisfaction; the reality principle imposes the demands that society makes upon the individual. Conflict is created between the drive for self-satisfaction and the need to behave according to the rules that society imposes. An individual's personality develops as he faces the problem of maintaining a satisfactory equilibrium between these two opposing forces.

<sup>9</sup> Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (New York: Carlton House, 1933).

The pleasure principle stems from biological sources. These are rooted in the intra-uterine foetus which rests in a pleasurable state. Beginning at birth, the infant is driven to achieve adequate contentment and satisfaction. This quest for satisfaction continues as the baby grows toward maturity. It is prodded by insatiable and primitive urges, but the achievement of satisfaction is thwarted as the individual encounters resistance from external forces in the form of other people's social customs and cultural values. As the child seeks to satisfy his own desires, he becomes aware that the social group in which he lives restricts and channels his desires into forms that are culturally acceptable to others. The child's personality develops through his efforts to satisfy his needs in relation to the external forces he encounters. This is the child's struggle between what he wants to do and what others permit him to do.

In his quest for achieving a satisfactory equilibrium, the child soon lays down a pattern of behavior which becomes his characteristic way of meeting situations. This characteristic pattern is the "picture" of his personality. Freud contends that the pattern of an individual's equilibrium, the nature of his personality, is established during infancy and early childhood. The adjustment pattern created during these early years pervades the lifelong personality of the individual.

According to Freud, the inner desires of an individual are unobservable and often inaccessible. They are subconsciously held, but they can be inferred as they are revealed through the individual's overt behavior. One of Freud's most significant contributions, however, is the fact that inner desires rarely ever reveal themselves in their true form. In the quest for equilibrium, the individual transforms the shape of his inner drives and reveals them in a form that he thinks will be acceptable to others. Unless his behavior is abnormal, he will act in response to the limitations within his environment.

According to Freud, inner needs are insatiable and they exert continuous pressure. An individual may modify his overt be-

Freud, is dynamic but relatively fixed in its characteristic behavior pattern. According to Mead, an individual's personality is open to potential development and change so long as he participates in social experience. According to Freud, the personality can change and mature only through a process of psychoanalysis whereby the individual gains awareness and insight into his behavior and relationships that stem from his inner drives.

Both Freud's and Mead's points of view on personality development have special educational implications. If, according to Freud, inner needs are so constant that they cannot be basically transformed and if an individual's pattern of interaction is shaped in early childhood, education can only hope to help children adjust their inner drives to social-cultural restrictions. If, however, according to Mead, an individual's personality is formed as he communicates with others in social interaction and if he internalizes the attitudes of others to modify his inner self, education can be a potential instrument for the continuous development, reconstruction, and enhancement of one's inner needs.

Freud's point of view makes a tremendous contribution in helping us to understand the importance of subconsciously held feelings. But he leaves little room for personality modification and social change. A personality, according to Freud, can hope to achieve no more than an equilibrium between constant subconscious psychobiological drives and environmental pressures.

In the face of environmental limitations, an individual must sublimate his inner drives or be destroyed. An individual endures pain and struggle to protect and satisfy his inner drives. This is the basis that Freud establishes for all human goals and aspirations. As indicated in Chapter 5, he does not recognize the aspirations of all human beings to enhance the value attributes in their experience. To Freud, the enhancement of values is a socially acceptable substitute for instinctual drives which satisfy the basic pleasure principle.

The implications of this point of view cause creative experience to lose its intrinsic meaning and value. Creative activity becomes

a mere substitute for more direct pleasures. "And not only did Freud not have any vision of constructive forces in man; he had to deny their authentic character. For in his system of thought there were only destructive and libidinal forces, their derivatives and their combinations. Creativity and love (eros) for him were sublimated forms of libidinal drives. In most general terms, what we regard as a healthy striving toward self-realization for Freud was, and could be, only an expression of narcissistic libido."<sup>10</sup>

Although Freud's interpretation of human needs and aspirations does not explain the quest for deep satisfaction in experience and creative fulfillment, his emphasis on subconscious forces in behavior is fundamental. Insights into subconscious aspects of behavior must be incorporated into teaching procedures if they are to be effective. Although he seems to relegate creative energy to a secondary and rather negative role, Freud's contribution to our understanding of the subconscious aspects of human behavior provides awareness of essential elements both in the creative process itself and in the development of the individual through that process.

Freud placed primary emphasis on subconsciously held attitudes and feelings, thus establishing a new direction for understanding the process of internalizing our experiences with others. The subconscious is a basic factor in all that a personality does in his social behavior, including his artistic activities. For this reason, Freudian theory makes a significant contribution to a foundation for art education.

### *Conscious and Subconscious Sources of Purposeful Behavior*

The discussion in Chapters 5 and 6 emphasized the interplay between conscious and subconscious elements in behavior in relation to the value of the arts in experience and education, and

<sup>10</sup> Karen Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1950), p. 378.



in the creative process in the visual arts. Without this interplay there can be neither creative activity nor perceptive awareness. The material in this chapter indicates how this interplay is at the root of personality development.

The subconscious, the inner self, functions at the core of our experience. It is the point around which our purposes, perceptions, and meanings cluster. Relationships between elements in our experience are "felt" and brought into new integration within our inner selves. The inner self is the reservoir of accumulated feelings and attitudes derived from past experiences. It is an individual's reference point for judging and assimilating significant elements in all the new experiences he encounters.

New experience is assimilated into the inner self as the individual grows consciously aware of the events he encounters. Personality develops as we become consciously aware of the meanings of the events in our new experiences. Conscious awareness of our selves as we act enables us to integrate new meanings into our inner core. We then reconstruct our inner selves.

Important contributions by men such as Adelbert Ames, Jr., reveal and further interpret the functional relationship between conscious and subconscious aspects of behavior. As a result, personality development is assuming more specific meaning for education through the arts. "Although the human organism . . . acts as a result of stimuli," says Ames, "*these stimuli in themselves have no meaning. The significances that are related to them in consciousness—and are experienced by the organism as sensations—are derived entirely from the organism's prior experience, personal and inherited . . . 'Meaning' is significance which has been disclosed through prior purposeful action . . . Therefore, it is in accordance with purpose, conscious or unconscious, that the choice is made. Within the chosen course, sensations are again important in determining the effectiveness of the action.*"<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Adelbert Ames, Jr., "Sensations, Their Nature and Origin," *Transformation*, I, No. 1 (1950), p. 11.

Activity in the arts is a mode of action. The stimuli derived by a child as he looks at the subject he is trying to paint, or even as he looks at his own painting, assume meaning in terms of his prior experiences. The meaning of the current sensations are "disclosed through prior purposeful action." When the child seeks to determine the effectiveness of his current action, new meanings are revealed to him so that they are incorporated into and become a part of his past experiences.

Ames continues to say: "Purpose underlies the constituent parts of sensation as energy is now known to underlie the constituent parts of the atom. Empirical evidence shows that a sensation is an experienced value resulting from purposeful action. The significance of the value, therefore, seems to involve purpose."<sup>12</sup> Values are derived from experience in purposeful action, and these values, in turn, determine the significance of a particular sensation to a particular individual. And Ames concludes by saying that: ". . . in education and training . . . we need to know how best to bring out the full potentiality of the individual child and how to develop in him surety in sensing the actual significance of the realities with which he is dealing . . . we need to know . . . How to train citizens (a) to recognize their purposes as individuals, (b) to rely on them, (c) to make them known and carry them out . . . to raise their purposes to higher standards; and to train leaders who will not impose their purposes on the people . . ."<sup>13</sup>

For education through the arts, this would suggest that we need teachers who can help children: to recognize their own purposes as individuals by working through the arts to communicate their own ideas, feelings, and attitudes; to rely on their own ideas and their own judgments as they explore and choose the ideas to be acted upon through the arts; and to carry out their own purposeful ideas in order to judge their effectiveness and so become better able "to raise their purposes to higher standards." In this way, purposeful aesthetic experience can make its maximum con-

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

tribution to the development of creative personalities among the children we teach.

### *Communication, Language, and Personality*

The communications through which individuals act and interact are in the form of language in its broadest sense: grimace, gesture, movement, visual form, as well as tonal and verbal communication. Through language and communication, individuals interact socially and grow consciously aware of themselves and of each other. Through language, children partake of each other's experience, and it is through language that they learn to see themselves as others see them.

As an individual acts through some medium of communication, he calls forth reactions from others around him. His personality and his social self develop as he grows sensitive to and able to accept these reactions from others. The individual's personality becomes adjusted to acting with others through his sensitivity to their communications. He recognizes the common purposes and meanings he shares with them. This is how he discovers ways to identify himself with others. In this way, he develops loyalties beyond his own immediate person.

The language forms created by one individual are meaningful for others to the degree that their language forms take on meaning for him. And we know that a language form involves far more than the mere grammatical syntax and structure of a language. A language form also embodies the nuances, social meanings, and values that the individual is seeking to communicate. This basic nature of language forms has been substantiated by general semanticists like Korzybski and Hayakawa. Organized words, and pictorial forms too, are "loaded"<sup>14</sup> with socially symbolic meanings. These meanings are developed and grow out of usage in a socially shared environment.

<sup>14</sup> Samuel I. Hayakawa, *Language in Action* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1939), p. 46.

The language an individual uses, whether verbal or visual, is his avenue for communication with others. The particular language forms he creates convey meanings and can be understood only within a social context. Language forms which are communicable can carry some understandable meaning to convey a common ground of experience to others. This means that the innovator of a new language or artistic form does not create it simply out of the desire for "novelty" or "originality."

The innovator of a language form creates the new form out of a personal need to *organize his sensations and ideas into coherent aesthetic structure in order to communicate his newly conceived ideas to others*. This also means that language forms are communicable only in so far as other individuals are able to share the ideas embodied in the forms with the person who produces them. These other individuals would be holding a social "point of view" that is approximately similar to that of the innovator of the language forms.

Interaction with shared social meanings is as important to the process of creative expression as the interaction with artistic materials, as discussed in Chapter 6. Without a social reference, personal expression becomes aimless. Without purpose, it lacks discipline—the desire within the individual to gain command of his ideas and his materials in order to organize them meaningfully. Expression that lacks such discipline grows meaningless both to the individual who expresses and to others. Rather than generating growth, meaningless expression spends itself. According to Dewey, "it is only a spewing forth."<sup>15</sup>

The growing child and the mature artist both create visual language forms to express their ideas. The communicability of their ideas and someone else's capacity to appreciate them depends on the ability to "see" and thus understand the "point of view" of the creator. This understanding enables one individual's visual forms to express shared meanings. When this occurs, the visual

<sup>15</sup> John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Minton, Balch & Co., 1934) p. 62.

forms become the embodiment of meanings that are as "real" to the artist as they are to others. In this context, the term "reality," when loosely applied in the arts, has led to tremendous confusion because any concept of reality, like any concept of values, is a social phenomenon. Reality is a "point of view," the interpretation of an idea by an artist, either child or adult. It varies according to its unique meanings for the individual and his social group.

Recent efforts to explain the phenomenon of reality in terms of certain personality types need to be seriously questioned. Any explanation of an individual or cultural style in the organization of visual forms must be studied in far greater detail before a theory based on personality types can be acceptable. Both Viktor Lowenfeld<sup>16</sup> and Herbert Read<sup>17</sup> lay undue emphasis on a typological explanation for personal and cultural variations in pictorial reality.

Read's interpretation is somewhat more fluid than Lowenfeld's because his is based upon a comparatively broad group of "temperamental traits." He says that the relationship between personality types and artistic expression "can be solved" historically "by reference to the prevailing social and economic conditions, and more especially to the effective expression of these conditions in strictly enforced ideological categories. It is only in a free democratic society, such as has existed (if only approximately) in Western Europe and the United States of America for the past hundred years, that we find the gradual emergence of types of art directly corresponding to types of men."<sup>18</sup>

Read emphasizes the uniqueness of an individual's point of view and the personal imprint on everything created by an individual. But his effort to categorize individual creations according to personality types seems to confuse his primary emphasis on individual uniqueness.

<sup>16</sup> Viktor Lowenfeld, *Creative and Mental Growth* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1952).

<sup>17</sup> Herbert Read, *Education Through Art* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1945).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

Lowenfeld's typological distinctions are more rigid than Read's, and they are consequently even less tenable. He suggests two distinct types, the "visual" and the "haptic," and he seems to imply a structural difference although he does not explicitly do so. Lowenfeld says: "When we investigate the artistic products of these two types we find that the visual type starts from his environment, that his concepts are developed into a perceptual whole through the fusion of partial visual experience. The haptic type, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with his own body sensations and with the tactual space around him."<sup>19</sup>

Lowenfeld goes on to say that the visual type is the more prevalent; only about twenty-five percent of all children are haptic; and about twenty-five percent lie somewhere between these two categories.<sup>20</sup> In establishing such type categories, Lowenfeld does not take into account the social-cultural impact that individuals absorb as they develop through the use of language forms. The particular social experiences of any individual, in part, determine his own unique characteristics. His past experiences are as potent in determining his behavior as his personal abilities and limitations are. An individual's accumulated past experience can also become modified through the new experiences he encounters. By failing to recognize the potency of social experience, Lowenfeld creates static typological categories. This would imply a physiological foundation but one which he does not demonstrate.

Personality develops through the internalization of social values. In part, these are derived from common meanings growing out of shared experiences among groups of people. The particular way an individual depicts reality through his art work is also derived, in part, from the same common ground of experience. The Ames Visual Demonstration Laboratory shows unquestionably that each of us sees things from his own unique point of view. We share experiences and interpret them in common with

<sup>19</sup> Viktor Lowenfeld, *The Nature of Creative Activity* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1939), p. 87.

<sup>20</sup> Viktor Lowenfeld, *Creative and Mental Growth*, p. 387.

other people only as we act together with other people toward the attainment of common purposes—toward common values.

Properly understood, *reality is nothing more than communicability*. In verbal language or in visual picture, reality is communicable among people only to the extent that particular experiences are shared by people. This is the common ground and the basis on which we are able to communicate with each other.

The common realities that children of different age levels communicate through visual art language are founded in part on their own socially shared experiences. Extended study of the art work of children has taught us that the characteristics of their work are partially explainable through information about their physical and conceptual developmental levels. These characteristics, however, are *always* affected and influenced by their social-psychological experience.

The adolescent, for example, conveys his own personal characteristics and values through his visual art experiences. He has already been influenced by, and has already incorporated within himself, the *social* problems of the adolescent—his insecurities resulting from the culture in which he lives and the personal needs he must satisfy because of them. Helping these children to create a satisfying self-image, and in this sense a wholesome personality, depends on the ability of teachers to provide educational situations that allow for experiences to be explored and shared together. Such situations are characterized by sensitive understanding and mutual trust.

Children can then exercise their uniqueness and individuality within the common framework of social acceptance. They can afford to be themselves, and they are able to develop the constructive internal discipline required by social interaction through their aesthetic construction.

Under such conditions, children can explore, invent, and exchange their personal "pictures" of reality. They can gain the secure conviction for personal maturity through the knowledge

that the ideas they have communicated are significant to others because they are shared and appreciated by others.

### *Visual Communication and Personality Development*

The language of the visual arts has unique and distinct qualities which provide particular opportunities for the communication of personal and social values. These unique opportunities enable experience in the arts to contribute to the personality development of children and youth.

Communication through the visual arts is a medium for direct action. In contrast to experience with verbal language, the individual at work in the arts does not deal with intellectual verbal ideas. Although words and visual forms are both symbols for elements in an individual's experience, verbal concepts can sometimes lose their relationship to the events in experience which induced them. For example, it is not at all uncommon for people, in the process of talking, to allow their conversation to wander among the isolated elements of the problem they are discussing. We find them losing the essence of the experience to which they were referring. This seems to occur when verbal concepts become separated from the events in experience they seek to describe.

Such a loss of relationship can also occur when an individual is working with pictorial symbols and visual concepts. Here, too, it is entirely possible for him to become lost among isolated fragments. When this occurs, the reason is that he has ignored the total image of the picture as he is face to face with it while he is working. At such a point, he is not working creatively. When involved in the creative process in the visual arts, the individual is constantly aware of, and reacting to, the *whole visual configuration*. It is always before him in its full form. All the parts are available to him at any given moment. Unlike verbal symbols in a story, the visual forms in a picture are not separated by the time it takes to recite the story.

Extended experience over a period of time with the organized



structure of visual forms in a painting or in a three-dimensional construction no doubt induces greater perceptive awareness. The important fact is the simultaneous occurrence of perceptive awareness and the making of sensitive judgments in the artistic act with visual forms. This enhances the acuity of the individual toward each of these elements. Enhanced perceptive awareness and sensitive judgment making occur in the processes of painting, sculpting, designing, or constructing as the individual searches for and tests his decisions *while at work*. Although these decisions are partially subconsciously felt, rather than entirely intellectually arrived at, they are no less effective or valid. Such intuitive-intellectual process is as much within the experience of children as it is within the ken of lay adults and professional artists.

The unique character of experience in the visual arts encourages the individual to perceive his own actions *in relation to the total construction he is creating*. In this way, the relationships between an individual's idea and the material through which he is working are apparent at any given moment. As he manipulates these over a period of time, he refines the relationships and builds them into an aesthetic structure.

When involved in creating a unified visual structure, the individual is simultaneously looking at his painting as he acts on it. He works on his painting and he sees what he is doing to it. For example, when a child is painting, his picture "talks back" to him and tells him about the idea he is interpreting while he is in the process of painting it. He responds to his own picture in much the same way that his friend responds to it. As the picture talks back to him, and as his teacher encourages him to *talk through his picture*, he acquires insight into the meanings that he is communicating both to himself and to others. He constructs a communicable image of some important and meaningful event in his social world. He transmits this meaning to others who can see and understand the world from a point of view which is similar to his own. By sharing in this social process he grows in sensitivity and mature awareness.

### *Personality Development and Education Through Art*

Education through experience in the arts can contribute to the development of a mature personality. But it would be a mistake for teachers to assume that *any* kind of participation in the arts can accomplish this purpose. To effect such an educational purpose, a teacher needs to develop the kind of working conditions in his classroom that encourages children to become involved in the process of the arts. To avoid any distortion of the artistic experience, a teacher needs to place *equal emphasis on the child's process of involvement and on the artistic product he is producing*. Neither one can be ignored at the expense of the other. A distorted process cannot result in a product which is both satisfying to the individual and communicative to others. At the same time, an individual cannot act creatively except as he acts through a medium with the purpose of organizing it into a satisfying product.

An art work is the embodiment of an individual's idea in a material. The process through which the individual manipulates his idea and his material causes both these elements to emerge into a form that is *comprehensive, integrated, and aesthetically coherent*. This coherent and aesthetic relationship has communicative impact. It gives to the aesthetic object its social significance and its social responsibility. At this point, the mature and creative personality shares deeply with others. The creative individual assimilates into his own being some of the comprehensible meanings which his art work conveys. The artistic product elicits its response from the person who created it and from the others who observe. It introduces a new experience, a continued unfolding of the artistic process.

It is the teacher's responsibility to create a learning situation in which children can *experience the communicative qualities of the visual art language*. Such qualities are fully realized only when emphasis is directed toward the *aesthetic embodiment of ideas in an artistic material*. It is every teacher's task to invent

his own particular teaching methods to accomplish such an educational purpose. The ability to carry out this task is at the core of effective teaching in art education.

Experience in the arts is more than mere expression in the ordinary sense of the word. Most current references to the value of artistic expression fail to recognize the personal and social responsibilities that accompany it. Consequently, the inherent self-discipline in creative expression frequently goes unrecognized. The fact that the creative individual expresses *personal and social meaning* is too often ignored. The communication of meanings by one individual to another is an *inherently disciplined and responsible* activity.

Teachers need to be aware of the fact that expression which is meaningless can distort individuality. "An immense amount has been said and written about the individual and about individuality. Too much of it, however, is vitiated by setting up what these words stand for as if it were something complete in itself in isolation."<sup>21</sup> When individuality is conceived of as a personality in isolation and devoid of social references, it can hold little promise to meet the problems of general education in America.

Artistic activity can unfold as a continuous process. It is intimately related to the unfolding of the personality itself. It is meaningful for the individual only when it stems from and serves his personal-social developmental needs and purposes.<sup>22</sup> Much teaching of artistic "styles" which is done under the guise of "modernism" stems from purposes which are imposed by the teacher rather than discovered in the social and personal needs of the student. Such teaching procedures may succeed in transmitting some information of a sort. It may even develop some superficial appreciation of a popular vogue, but it certainly fails to develop sensitivity in artistic experience. It does not permit the

<sup>21</sup> John Dewey, "Foreword," in *The Unfolding of Artistic Activity*, by Henry Schaefer-Simmern (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948), p. ix.

<sup>22</sup> Henry Schaefer-Simmern, *The Unfolding of Artistic Activity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948).

personality to fulfill its own purpose, its own integration, or its own significant meanings. As a result, the work of the students "looks" as if the artistic act had been performed, but the experience is not internalized.

To teach children effectively through the arts, it is necessary to synthesize the concepts that have been discussed in the foregoing chapters and to translate them into action. Such a synthesis suggests a new frame of reference with implications for teaching in education through the arts.

### *Summary*

Creative experience is at once expressive and self-reflective. An individual acts expressively and absorbs into his personality the meanings of the aesthetic forms he has created. Expressive behavior through the visual arts affords unique opportunities for personal and social development.

The individual at work in the arts acts in terms of his own insights and understandings. He communicates these to others and deepens his own awareness through their reactions to his work. He hereby clarifies his own role as an actor, and he simultaneously acquires enhanced insight into his own self. His personality develops through this process of social interaction. He internalizes the meanings as they become clarified in his aesthetic and social experiences.

Creative experience in the visual arts provides a vehicle for social communication through which the individual embodies his intuitive-intellectual insights into unified aesthetic form. The individual is able to create communicative symbols for the experiences he takes part in and shares with other people. This process of communication encourages him to build coherent and organized interpretations of events in his experience. This leads to mature sensitivity and awareness. His personality grows through the development of self-disciplined and responsible insight into his own ideas and the interpretations of events by others.

## PART THREE

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### *A Foundation for Art Education*

## 8

### A New Frame of Reference

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THE concepts from the behavior sciences, cultural history, and philosophy as presented in the preceding chapters suggest a new frame of reference for teaching through the arts. The information derived from these fields of study suggests how teachers who view experience in the arts in terms of behavior can help children in satisfying some of their personal and social needs. Education through the arts can then fulfill its function effectively.

Creative experience can be encouraged by teachers who are able to put our expanding knowledge to work. They can help children to use the arts with purpose and meaning. Experiences in the arts then become valuable in the lives of children.

#### *Putting Our Knowledge to Work*

As teachers succeed in putting their knowledge to work, they consciously seek to create appropriate teaching methods to encourage those aspects of human behavior that are an individual's developmental right. When children are helped to behave in meaningful and purposeful ways, they make progress in fulfilling their own potentialities. They reveal their aspirations through behavior that is prompted by their own purposes, goals, and judgments. Good teaching helps children to grow aware of their aspirations. They come to realize the consequences of their be-

havior and modify their judgments to improve their quality when necessary.

Young children can grow sensitive to the relationships between their own judgments and the consequences of their behavior. If their teacher is respectful of their right to make judgments, they can accept the necessary social limitations on their behavior. They can understand the rights of others to make judgments too, and they can learn to behave in ways that support rather than infringe on the rights of others.

This can be illustrated by the case of a five-year-old girl who was being questioned by an adult about the school she attended. The man said to her, "I hear that the children in your class are allowed to do anything they please." The little girl replied by saying, "We do anything we please so long as we do not bother other people's pleasures."

The fundamental basis for all good teaching is the fact that an individual's purposes and judgments are his own. A teacher can help him learn to modify them by insuring his secure feeling that he has the right to make them. Children can accept criticism about their judgments and they can learn to reconstruct them, but they never truly accept another person's judgments if acceptance implies a denial of their own right to make them. Good teaching does not require children to accept goals that are dictated by others, including the teacher.

Respect for the prerogatives of children to make their own judgments is their developmental right. They learn by testing the validity of the course of behavior they follow. The teacher's task is to help by bringing into awareness those consequences which the child is ready to understand but which he is as yet unable to see.

When education through the arts helps children to realize and to exercise the high degree of personal control that is available in artistic activity, it often leads to the individual's redefinition of personal values in experience. The development of sensitivity to harmonious relationships is an important indication of a child's

growth in aesthetic awareness. He comes to use this sensitivity as a basic criterion for the judgments he will be called upon to make in future actions.

Teachers who help children to expand their own capacities in the making of sound judgments are putting to work their knowledge about behavior and the arts. Helping children to express their purposes coherently through the creation of organically unified art forms leads them to the essence of aesthetic activity. On the other hand, we can hardly expect to have creative teaching if teachers are restricted by courses of study and predetermined sequences of activities which may appear "logical" according to the purposes of the teacher, but meaningless in the experience of the children. In order for children to develop their full creative potentialities, teachers need to organize their teaching materials with the same creative and experimental insight we would expect of children. Creative teaching accepts the challenge of emerging aesthetic action.

Teachers need to put their developing framework of knowledge to work through searching and disciplined reflection on their ideas and their teaching methods. Teachers who help children in the arts need to move beyond the many broad and general beliefs of art education and toward a critical concern for the significance of these beliefs. The application of knowledge can facilitate the examination of beliefs in terms of their implications for a teacher's day-to-day actions with children.

The task of putting to work our expanding fund of knowledge from the behavior sciences and the arts is not unique to the problems of teachers who work in the arts. Everyone who works with children in all the phases of their growth and development is faced by this challenge. At the opening of the Mid-Century White House Conference for Children and Youth, Leonard W. Mayo presented the problem of "Putting Our Present Knowledge to Work." He suggested five important ways through which we can make better use of our knowledge to inspire the improvement of guidance in the educational development of children. He said:



"If we are to make substantial advances in application (of knowledge) in the next decade we must work consciously and assiduously to develop the following:

"1. A scientific attitude of mind, not an ordinary, open mind, but a searching one . . .

"2. A far better synthesis of available knowledge than we have at present . . . The realization that research, application, and more research are all a part of one basic process is of profound importance . . .

"3. The recognition that there is an art as well as a science of application, and that perhaps fifty percent of both lies in knowing what knowledge to apply as well as how to apply it.

"4. An identification with and cultivation of the channels through which knowledge must be disseminated and applied . . .

"5. Intelligent team work . . . , collective ignorance is, perhaps, the strongest possible argument for team work between those who do research and those who apply; . . . it is an eloquent argument, furthermore, in favor of seeing human beings as a whole, and of applying what we know as a whole . . ."<sup>1</sup>

These five ways of putting our knowledge to work suggest specific things that teachers can do if they are to solve the complex problems of helping children to grow through experience in the arts. Teachers should:

1. Engage in continuous and critical examination of the content they teach and their teaching methods in terms of the available knowledge of the nature of human behavior and the nature of the arts;

2. Engage in action research, even if they conduct it independently and even if they limit their study to single and relatively small aspects of their teaching program. In this way, they can test the effectiveness of their teaching procedures in the light of the synthesis of available knowledge;

<sup>1</sup> Leonard W. Mayo, "Putting Our Present Knowledge to Work," *Social Work Journal*, XXXII, No. 1 (January, 1951), pp. 7-8.

3. Transform the process of teaching into a creative act. This would mean that, in order to encourage children to work creatively in the arts in terms of their own real interests and problems, the teacher would need to reveal to the children his own uncertainty about the solution of their problems. He would need to reveal his own creative efforts to seek and discover the solutions along with the children. Both children and teacher would bring their collective knowledge and experience to bear on the problem;

4. Identify themselves with their administrators, fellow teachers, professional organizations, and educational agencies to cultivate the most effective means for verifying their solutions of teaching problems through the application of available knowledge;

5. Engage in intelligent teamwork with administrative officers who are responsible for research, and with college and university personnel who are engaged in research. Teamwork between teachers who are applying available knowledge and research workers who are seeking the expansion of knowledge can help clarify the dimensions of the total teaching-learning problem. A grasp of the multidimensional aspects of this problem can make a more realistic whole of the relationship between teaching and research.

Underlying these five specific ways to put our knowledge to work are two tasks that need persistent and simultaneous attention. If teachers are to meet their responsibilities in the challenge of educating through the arts, they need to find their own ways in their own communities to (1) engage in the continuous study of the pertinent aspects of human behavior as they are being revealed through our "expanding synthesis of knowledge," and (2) develop their own facilities for testing, evaluating, and modifying their own teaching methods according to the knowledge they find available.

When knowledge is applied to teaching practices, it can help teachers dissolve many of the current ambiguities and confusions in art education.

### *Dissolution of Ambiguities and Confusions*

Greater awareness of the nature of human behavior can lead to a clearer understanding of personality development. Behavior and personality, when taken together with what is known about human experience with aesthetic form, can lead to a clearer understanding of the creative process itself. Clarity about the nature of the creative process in the visual arts dissolves many ambiguities and confusions that are impeding the improvement of teaching through the arts.

Experience in the arts is an effective avenue through which individuals convey their ideas, attitudes, and feelings. It is a potent way of expressing and internalizing values which become integrated into the developing personality.

In order to help children build aesthetic organizations of their *ideas* and *feelings* through the manipulation of art media, it is necessary for the teacher to be concerned with *what* individual children are trying to say, *why* they feel that it is important for them to say it, as well as *how* they can say it. When children grow aware of the relationships between these three aspects—what, why, and how—experience in the arts assumes significance in their lives. To help children in achieving such awareness is the central purpose of teaching through the arts. Learning to say things that are important in ways that are meaningful is a primary educational task for which the arts are particularly well suited.

If experience in the arts provides meaningful ways to express ideas that are important, a choice between what some call the practical or leisure time values in the arts would indeed appear fruitless. If experience in the arts is an important aspect of human behavior, education through the arts should *fulfill a human need by helping children in achieving rich satisfaction through the construction of integrated and aesthetic relationships.*

There can be no doubt about the need to recognize the fact that most of the people in our society work in the mechanized

systems of industry which are producing the enormous material wealth we enjoy. There can also be no doubt that people can enjoy the satisfactions of participation in the arts during the time when they are away from their industrial jobs. Yet to relegate activity in the arts to "a leisure time status" because of this condition denies the real significance of the arts.

Activity that is given "a leisure time label" is viewed as something "extra" which can be afforded only as a luxury when we have nothing more useful to do. In the process of education as well as in the general processes of social living, healthy children and adults require adequate means for personal expression. The opportunity to express oneself fully is one of the most important prerequisites for healthy and mature living. Teachers and recreational leaders have the responsibility of helping children and adults understand the many significant activities in which people engage in order to attain satisfaction. How to help children and adults to apportion their time among these significant activities is a major educational task.

Some people contend that the arts become a part of an individual's everyday living when he appears to be exhibiting "better taste" in the selection of utilitarian objects. If "better taste" is the only criterion, the judgment can be fallacious because it oversimplifies the problem by omitting some very relevant and important questions.

Processes of everyday living take on artistic proportions only when they are characterized by the dynamic relationships in creative behavior and aesthetic problem solving. Although an individual may choose objects of "good design," this fact alone is inadequate to show that he is acting in terms of his inner sensibilities. It is entirely too easy to develop a veneer of "good taste" and to choose a "style" that has been "taught." Teaching based on a limited conception of the arts in everyday living can show people how to make certain choices. Such teaching, however, does not educate simply because it teaches how to make mechanical choices. The individual "knows" the superficial markings of a

"style," but he lacks a sympathetic understanding of its aesthetic structure and meaning.

Any choice between the teaching of appreciation as opposed to the teaching of creative expression would be entirely fruitless. Sympathetic appreciation is as dynamic as creative expression. In each, we interpret in our own terms and from our personal points of view. We internalize the meanings from the things we see or do. Any teaching method which does not take into account the fact that people interpret what they see denies to individuals their most important source for creative thought and action.

Every great work of art needs to be perceived and internalized in order to be appreciated. Appreciation is an *active process* in terms of the symbolic and structural meanings of the work of art which the adult and child can recognize and *relate to themselves*. Appreciation is outgoing, like expression, and the individual derives as deep satisfaction from one as he does from the other. Moreover, one stimulates, encourages, and feeds the other.

Any choice between the teaching of "skills" or "free expression" would be as futile as a choice between expression and appreciation. Because free expression has often been opposed to skills, many have come to consider it unrestricted, uncontrolled, and irresponsible.

Meaningful expression demands control and responsibility. Children grow responsible as they develop their capacity to share their values with others. They develop their values as they express themselves to others and *as they act* toward the fulfillment of their purposes. Through such action toward others, and their capacity to reflect upon their actions, children learn to express themselves more skillfully. *They develop mature responsibility for their expressive acts*. When unrelated to personal and social responsibility, unlimited "free expression" becomes unproductive. It neither challenges the individual nor generates growth. Ultimately, it hinders development toward aesthetic sensitivity.

The teaching of unrelated skills is not the alternative. When unrelated to purposeful activity, skills are misunderstood. When

learned for their own sake, they do not lead to creative action. They become mechanical unless they are learned within the context of activity that is personally meaningful.

Freedom of expression assumes a totally different meaning when seen as the expansion of the avenues through which individuals can project their ideas and feelings. When embodied in organized, coherent, and communicative forms, personal ideas and feelings become the expressions of human purposes. Then the individual is free to express his own ideas, feelings, and interpretations. He seeks a discipline and imposes it on himself in order to express himself coherently.

When children ask their teacher for help, they need the kind of help that will enlarge their understanding. Children who understand are able to develop the internal discipline that creative activity requires. If they are given skillful tricks instead of help toward understanding, they are taught to relinquish their freedom.

Freedom of expression is one of the characteristics of the creative process. It involves sensitive awareness of the idea to be expressed and the materials through which the expression takes form. It encourages a mature concern for the *meaning of the aesthetic form* that emerges. Such freedom is a challenge for action. It requires the individual to seek internal discipline and skill in the search for intelligible meaning and social significance.

An individual who builds coherent and unified visual forms integrates his action in terms of his ideas and his materials. He poses a problem with which he associates himself by organizing his behavior in relation to it. The nature and content of the problem become integrated into his mode of behavior. He is then able to act creatively.

To help children grow toward integrated behavior, they should be encouraged to participate in selecting and planning the experiences from which they are to learn. If the teacher alone arranges materials and selects the ideas and problems for work, the children are not free to integrate their own behavior. Integration

is a personal process and develops only through the unique relationships that an individual is able to recognize. It occurs within the individual, and it is meaningful only when it facilitates the continuous feeling for relationships in experience. Teachers, through the methods they employ, create the circumstances which may encourage or hinder children in the integration of their learning experiences.

Circumstances which encourage integration create fluid and flexible relationships. They do not segment and divide the many elements that need to be considered together. They do not prescribe a rigid channel into which the elements of a problem are predetermined.

For example, a teacher decided to have her class work on a mural because she thought that this would be a good culminating activity for their unit of study. She arbitrarily divided the children into committees and assigned each committee to work on a portion of the mural. The children had no part in planning the work which could have been meaningful had it not been arbitrarily imposed. This procedure not only made integrated experience impossible, but it also inhibited and frustrated the spontaneity and creativeness of the children.

Had there been joint participation of the children and the teacher in the selection of the problem, it would have become clear to both that it was unwise for all of them to work on the mural. There were not enough important jobs for all of them to work on in relation to the mural. Some of them might have preferred to work on other things. The predetermined arrangement by the teacher, without free and open consultation with the children, made it impossible for them to relate themselves to the problem. As a result, their behavior became less rather than more integrated and the mural itself was neither unified nor coherent.

Circumstances that encourage children toward integration bring into open consideration the complexities relating to a problem. These are examined loosely, fluidly, and tentatively. The

individual children are encouraged to seek and identify the significant relationships in the experience. They are helped to be selective and to integrate the meaningful aspects within their own persons. They are then able to select the tasks that are important to them. They become able to express their feelings and ideas through their own forms.

Teachers need to create the circumstances that encourage children into *fluid, formative, and controllable action*. Such circumstances encourage the creative process to flow with its inherent discipline and satisfactions.

### *A New Frame of Reference*

The dissolution of some of the ambiguities and confusions about art and leisure, art and living, expression, skill, appreciation, and integrated creative behavior leads us to the need for a new frame of reference for education through the arts.

Creative experience in the visual arts intensifies the process of forming significant personal meanings into organized communicable symbols. Although present in general experience, this process achieves a unique degree of unity and intensity in artistic experience. Creative experience, though not always recognized as such, is an integral part of everyone's living, in the process of growth and development toward maturity. The role of education through art is to bring the quality of creative experience to maturity in the education of children because some of the attitudes in our culture tend to remove the arts from the personal experience of people.

Experience in the arts depends upon *direct action*. It challenges an individual to make judgments, and it simultaneously requires him to *act on those judgments*. The action is dynamic, involving the individual's innermost feelings toward outer materials, people, and events. For example, a group of fourth-grade children were studying the lives of great men at the time when Washington's and Lincoln's birthdays were being celebrated.



They were studying about great men in American history and were looking for information about these people to discover what qualities make men great. They began to see that greatness stems from courage, vision, inventiveness, and creativity, and they looked to great men like Henry Ford, Charles Lindbergh, and Albert Einstein in our own times. In painting a picture about the particular great man that he admired most, each child was able to project his own feelings and aspirations into the aesthetic forms he constructed. In this process, all the children were developing their own inventiveness and creativity.

If artistic experience is active expression and communication of meaningful values, it is not ordinary "fun, enjoyment, and pleasure." Ordinary fun is very different from the deep satisfaction growing out of contemplative play in the creative process. A limited view of "enjoyment and pleasure" denies the serious and disciplined character of creative action through the arts. It also fails to recognize the social demands on American education.

Although action in the arts is satisfying, it cannot be justified primarily on the basis of the "release of tensions," "free expression," and the "enjoyment of manipulation." "Struggle and conflict may be themselves enjoyed, although they are painful, when they are experienced as a means of developing an experience . . . There is . . . an element of undergoing, of suffering in the large sense, in every experience . . . It involves reconstruction which may be painful. Whether the necessary undergoing phase is by itself pleasurable or painful is a matter of particular conditions. It is indifferent to the total esthetic quality, save that there are few intense esthetic experiences that are wholly gleeful. They are certainly not to be characterized as amusing, and as they bear down upon us they involve a suffering that is none the less consistent with, indeed a part of, the complete perception that is enjoyed."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Minton, Balch & Co., 1934), p. 41.

The quality of experience in artistic activity stems, in part, from the unusually high degree of personal control an individual exercises during the artistic act. The creation of an integrated symbolic visual structure, an art object, *demands disciplined personal control*. The individual controls the embodiment of his own idea into a material that he manipulates. He brings into being an integrated structure that conveys some meaning both to the creator and to the observer. The quest for personal satisfaction and fulfillment is partially achieved in the discovery of meaning by the individual and the recognizable appreciation of this meaning by someone else.

This can be illustrated by the case of a junior high school boy who had become interested in enameling on copper. With the help of his teacher, he learned how to hammer and shape simple copper trays. He also learned how to decorate their surface with enamel glazes. He discovered that a satisfying decoration required experiment with various methods of application in order to control the material for achieving the effect he desired. He made a number of trays and tried different methods of application in terms of different designs. One day, he asked his teacher if he had some wire screen. He explained that he thought wire screen could help him get a different kind of texture on his enameled surfaces.

When the boy asked for the screen, he was asking for the material he needed to test his new idea for controlling his material more effectively. He sought this control because he wanted to achieve a subtlety in his work. Refinement and subtlety became the source of his satisfaction and the meaning he was discovering in his work. His own meaning was reinforced when his new tray proved more satisfying than those he had made previously. He was particularly satisfied when his classmates and his teacher admired the new level of his accomplishment. The refinement in his tray was meaningful to them too.

If children create visual forms to express the ideas and feelings that are important to them, teachers should help them to

become increasingly sensitive to the aspects of experience they seek to communicate through activity in the arts. Such teaching builds a fertile foundation from which children can create meaningful visual language forms. The teacher who places sole emphasis on visual form *per se* prescribes a form which may be meaningful in terms of his own ideas. In doing this, however, he restricts the right of his children to develop forms which are expressive of the meanings in their own ideas.

This suggests an interpretation of the term "originality." The originality of a visual art form depends more on its harmonious relationship to the uniqueness and depth of the feeling or idea it conveys than it does on its "novelty." Visual language forms embody individual and social meanings. The originality is intimately a part of the uniqueness of the meaning.

Because education through the arts deals with the behavior of children, it is intimately related to the development of their personalities. Artistic experience provides a vital avenue for individuals to achieve personal fulfillment, self-realization, and maturity. Informed acquaintance with relevant aspects of personality development helps teachers contribute positively to the growth of children. The personalities of children develop, in part, through the particular educational experiences that a teacher provides. These experiences determine the way a child will interact with his teacher and the others in his class. Clearly, the teacher is the primary source of authority in the classroom and the tone he sets pervades the interpersonal relationships and the behavior of all the individuals in that classroom.

For example, an art teacher in a high school began the class hour by saying, "I want to tell you exactly what you are to do today." He went on to describe a particular theme that he had selected for their paintings and requested that the boys and girls paint it first in black, gray, and white before attempting it in color. He concluded by saying, "I will be at my desk and will expect you to bring your sketches to me for my approval before you go ahead." When a few of the boys were asked what they

planned to do with their pictures, they replied, "We don't know yet. We have to show our sketch to the teacher to find out what he wants."

The method used by this teacher could not help creating dependency in his students. The class did *exactly* as he requested. They did not discuss the problem with their classmates to broaden their own thinking, nor were they permitted to arrive at any personal decisions. They followed the procedures outlined by their teacher and performed the task mechanically. They talked to each other about irrelevancies and were in no way involved in their task.

*In contrast, another art teacher in another high school was interested to hear that a few of the boys and girls were thinking of doing a puppet play. They had already talked with the dramatics teacher about the characters they wanted to write into their play, and now they hoped that the art teacher would allow them to work on the puppets during their art period. The teacher was quick to accept the idea and immediately proceeded to ask them more about the kinds of characters they wanted to build and the kinds of materials they thought about using. He made some suggestions and agreed with them that puppet building would be a very appropriate activity for them to work on during their art periods.*

These children were being taught to be inquisitive, resourceful, and independent. Because their inventive ideas were respected and valued, they were accepting the teacher's suggestions and were willing to integrate those they felt would be useful into their scheme. Their conversation centered around the task they had selected. They helped each other and appreciated the help of the teacher.

The personality of an individual develops out of his experiences with other people. Although his personality is a reflection of his own accumulated social interactions, his past experiences with other people, he never loses his own identity. He is never a replica of another person. His own interests and potentialities,

the actions in which he participates, and the circumstances under which they occur lead him to develop a personality that is unique and different from the others around him. For this reason, the *unique capacities* of an individual and his *unique psychosocial and biological history* are of utmost importance. Information about these can help a teacher in understanding an individual's *unique feelings, assumptions, and his unique behaviors and forms of reaction.*

Individuals act in their own particular ways and from their own particular points of view. *The personal social-biological history of each of us is unique.* We grow mature as we are able to know ourselves and to share more of our personal selves with others. But we share with and appreciate others only to the degree that we are sensitive to the selves of others. We reveal our inner feelings toward them as we act, and we act through the meaningful media of communication that we are able to control.

The personal expressions by individuals through media of communication are social acts because they are invitations for new reactions. When a person expresses himself through visual or verbal language, he anticipates a reaction, a response from others. Although artistic expression is personally developed, *it is a social act.* It is social in nature even if the person who expresses has withdrawn from others to become entirely introverted. The nature of his expression conveys his withdrawal from others which in itself has social implications. Aesthetic personal expression is integrated and unified. *The individual's behavior in the process of aesthetic expression is also integrated and unified.*

To provide children with avenues for creative behavior, teachers need to be sensitive to the circumstances under which individuals can act through the arts in meaningful ways. Teachers need to be able to recognize the differences between behavior which merely "utilizes" art materials and behavior which is *purposeful, artistic, creative.*

The purpose of all education is based on the assumption that an individual can learn to develop and modify his behavior. If

behavior can be modified through learning, an individual's biological and hereditary determinants are *only* limitations to his potential growth. In themselves, however, they do not define the limits of his potential growth. These limits depend on how this individual is treated, and how he interacts with the circumstances he encounters in his educational and general experience.

Teachers cannot then assume that certain children are "talented" and others are not. Nor can we label some children as "visual minded"<sup>3</sup> and others as "emotional." Such characterizations are sometimes useful to diagnose a particular situation in order to plan a procedure in teaching, but they cannot be used to imply that the person described is unchangeable. When people are classified according to fixed characterizations, our attitude toward them grows rigid. We then lose sight of every individual's potentiality for change, and we tend to deny the dynamics of human behavior, the interaction between the developing personality and the world around him.

The paramount task for the arts in general education is to help children integrate their ideas, feelings, and attitudes—their perceptions—into aesthetic wholeness. These perceptions are extracted from the growing individual's *whole stream of life*. They are given meaningful form through aesthetic action.

When teachers recognize that experience in creative activity makes a difference in the behavior of a child, they discover the difference in the way a child acts and works. The actions of a child, the things he considers valuable, the ideas he considers important, the things he enjoys doing, the way he does things, and the way he enters into new experiences *become the evidence* of his creative insight.

A child's capacity to create new and challenging problems for himself is his most potent source of continuous growth and development. It imbues him with a zest for living and an eagerness to go forward to meet the new and exciting events in experience as

<sup>3</sup> Viktor Lowenfeld, *Creative and Mental Growth* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1952), p. 231.

it unfolds. Because creative capacity is self-generating, it is fundamentally practical. It is the surest route to mature living.

Awareness of some of the conflicting cultural attitudes toward the arts can help to resolve the paradox between economic and psychological practicality. Although the arts are not always considered "useful," "functional," or "profitable," they are *humanly useful, personally functional, and educationally profitable for inner sensibility and psychological health.*

If education through art is to contribute to the enhancement of value attributes in the experience of children, it needs to reaffirm its belief and confidence in the individual. Children need acceptance and encouragement to be themselves. They are then able to use the media of the arts to communicate to others those attitudes and feelings that have meaning and value for themselves. The group of children, in turn, needs to recognize and honor the unique ways in which individuals convey significant meanings through organized aesthetic forms. When a group is sensitive to an individual's emerging ideas, all members of the group are able to satisfy their personal or social needs to the limits of their capacities. In this way, the creative process through artistic experience can become the avenue for expressive action in which children realize their purposes and the meanings of their inner feelings.

For the creative process to pervade the actions of children, it needs to become an inherent part of the actions of teachers. Creative teaching is possible to the degree that teachers are able to harmonize and merge their own purposes with the purposes of children. Creative teaching is the conscious development of fluid and challenging situations by a teacher to help children recognize, expand, and act upon their own purposes. The teacher carries the responsibility for educational leadership. He encourages children to expand their purposes to higher levels by helping them reflect on their meanings.

In order to provide expanding educational opportunities for aesthetic action, teachers need to help children deal with their

ideas and feelings as they seek to embody them into aesthetic forms. Because the giving of such help is an art as well as a science, teachers need to reveal their own creative involvement with the problem in the act of teaching. The recognition that teaching is a creative act is reflected in the behavior of a teacher. The recognition that the arts are creative aspects of human behavior is reflected in the education of children through the arts.

### *Operational Problems of Education Through Art*

All teachers, in order to keep their teaching alive and dynamic, need continuously to formulate appropriate questions for the experimental study of their own teaching procedures. When such study, in the field of art education, is based upon sound and sensitive evaluation, it can expand our insights into the fundamental teaching problems. It can lead to the development of teaching procedures that can accomplish the encouragement of the creative potentialities in children. Creative behavior is the primary concern of education through the arts, and provides us with the basic source for operational questions to be explored.

Teachers need to discover ways through which to direct attention to the study of creative behavior in terms of our general social-cultural attitudes and orientations. Can an educational environment which encourages creative activity among young people promote sufficient individual security to lead toward expanding human sensitivity in our culture?

Since our culture as a whole does not seem to provide the environment for communal creative activity, how can the public schools best assemble the creative leadership to establish the conditions which are conducive to creative thought and action? What are some of the specific effects upon children at different age levels when a teacher puts into operation some of the conditions that encourage creative action? To what extent are the effects of creative involvement in the arts reflected in the other things that children do in school?



The study of questions such as these requires the intelligent teamwork of groups of teachers. Together they can define the behaviors they are trying to encourage in their children. Together they can evaluate the specific things they do in terms of their effects on the children. And together they can evaluate the effects of the purposeful involvement of children in creative experience in the arts on the behavior of the children in other phases of the school program.

Teachers who help children work in the arts need to study questions related to problems of evaluation. They need to experiment with various evaluative procedures in order that evaluation can become a diagnostic tool for determining the selection of future activities as well as a tool for determining a child's level of accomplishment.

There are two sources of evidence from which a teacher can evaluate the developmental growth of a child: the way he behaves as he works, and his art product. Because the relationships between process and product are inseparable, sound evaluative study cannot be based upon one or the other. The art experience is a process that develops through a material and in terms of an art product. Although this experience cannot be studied in terms of the product alone, the product can in no way be minimized. Without a product to be acted upon, there can be no process. The often-repeated oversimplification that "we are interested in process, not in product" is fruitless and leads nowhere. Evaluation of experience in the arts needs to be made in terms of the quality of an individual's products as well as the quality of the overt aspects of his behavior.

In taking the evaluation of a child's art product as a problem for study, it is essential to recognize that a single art product without a reference in time is unreliable evidence for evaluation. To evaluate the growth of a child, teachers need to study the evidence that can be found in periodic examples of work done by individual children. In taking the child's behavior into account, a teacher can derive valuable evidence concerning the way the child uses

his time, the kinds of questions he asks, the kinds of ideas that intrigue him, the degree of independent choices and judgments he will make, and his general capacity to develop insight into his own actions. Evaluation of evidence drawn from a child's behavior and his products can be used to encourage growth.

Teachers need to study and experiment with the multiple ways in which they can satisfy the needs, interests, and capacities of individual children. Questions related to individual needs involve the timing, the choice, and the variety of activities. Without a doubt, they also involve the number of children in the group, the interaction among these children, and the physical equipment in the room in terms of its potentialities for arrangement into work areas.

If purposeful experience in the arts depends, in part, on the degree of personal involvement and identification with a chosen problem, individual children can be expected to work at varying tempos. They can also be expected to choose ideas that require expression in certain media if the activity is to be meaningful to them. If a sufficient variety of media is available to them for purposeful and appropriate choice, teachers need to experiment with possibilities in room management so that children can work with suitable materials at times that are fitting. The judgment regarding appropriate time needs to be made on the basis of the timeliness of the child's idea.

Related to the problem of satisfying individual interests and needs are questions concerning the scope of the child's experience with art media. Teachers need to study the degree to which it is valuable for children to work with a variety of art materials. It is certainly important for children to have the use of a wide variety of media through which to explore their unique ideas. If the purpose is exploration of ideas for construction into aesthetic form, it is rather questionable whether each child needs to work with each available material. Insistence on quantity of materials may defeat the more fundamental purpose of opportunities for varied and appropriate choices.

Teachers need to experiment with the physical arrangement of the furniture and storage facilities in their rooms. They need to study the degree to which it is necessary and important for children to be able to move freely, to help themselves, to choose their own paper, colors, or tools. The degree of free movement would obviously vary according to the particular facilities that are available and the particular background of experience of a group of children. Continuous experimentation to create the maximum freedom for choice and movement is necessary in each situation.

Children can learn to help a teacher keep house if he allows them to become involved in the problem of housekeeping. They can then take responsibility for getting materials from the storage places, for working with wood at one table and with clay at another, for awaiting their turns if the space at the clay table is in use, and for cleaning up and putting things away when it is time to move on to another activity. Teachers should study the behavior of each group of children in order to test and determine the kinds of requests to make and group decisions to reach.

Teachers need to study ways to expand the interests of children and to help them set new goals for themselves. They need to find their own ways of listening to children to discover the germinal interests that are present in the minds of children. They need to involve themselves with the ideas of the children so that together they can engage in contemplative play. Teachers can then find the ways to set new goals together with the children and to give them the help they need to enhance their capacity in setting their own goals.

In the setting of new goals the teacher must be aware of both the physical and the conceptual developmental capacities of the children. Parallel to this is the teacher's capacity to bring children into contact with the rich visual and ideological resources in our collective cultural heritage as well as in the immediate environment.

Teachers need to direct attention to one of the basic components of the creative process, the interaction of the individual

with his material while engaged in the process. In terms of satisfying the needs and abilities of children of different ages, different capacities, and different experiential backgrounds, teachers need to experiment with the potential uses of the wide variety of art materials. Then they will discover which can best contribute to the creative development of their children in terms of the possibilities and challenging limitations of these materials.

Experimentation can help teachers become more fully aware of the rigidities and resiliencies of different materials. As a result, they can even help children create and improvise materials that have aesthetic potentialities and are adequately manageable. In this way, they can provide materials that challenge but do not mechanize the process. They can encourage the selection of materials that will best serve the child's idea and purpose at a given time. They can lead children to the creative and educational use of materials rather than to mechanical and limited information about materials. Mechanical information impedes the creative involvement of children because of the insurmountable rigidities it imposes.

Teachers need to study the relationships between creative experience in the visual arts and creative experiences in verbal language, drama, music, and dance. As has already been indicated, there are distinct differences in the nature of the materials as well as in the nature of the forms, but there are also important similarities. Creative experiences in all the arts stem from sensitivity to ideas and to the materials of the particular art form. Teachers can experiment to discover the degree to which sensitivity in creative involvement with one art form can contribute to the development of sensitivity in another.

When teachers who help children in the arts succeed in discovering the common ground among the variety of meaningful expressive forms, they can develop clearer relationships between education through the arts and other areas in a child's school experience. Together with other teachers, they can create the means, in their own schools, to encourage the integration of the

variety of expressive experiences. Children attain integration as teachers help them bring relationships into awareness. This enables them to grow in their creative capacities.

These are some of the basic problems and questions that teachers, individually and together, need to study and explore experimentally. Each of them has operational implications which can be tested through the examination of the effects of certain teaching methods on the behavior of children.

As the implications of these problems and questions are explored in operational terms, they provide a definition of the role of the teacher who works with children through the arts. The definition of this role takes on specific form in terms of the organization of the educational programs in the elementary and secondary schools.

### *Summary*

The challenging problem for all who are associated with the education of children, particularly teachers who help children to work in the arts, is to discover the ways to put to work our expanding framework of knowledge. Knowledge about human behavior and experience in the arts needs to be applied with maximum effectiveness to processes of teaching. To meet this challenge, teachers need to: (1) engage in continuous study of our expanding synthesis of relevant information, and (2) develop their individual capacities to test and modify their own methods of teaching according to the information available.

Information about behavior and the arts, when applied to the problems of education through the arts, helps us dissolve many of the ambiguities and confusions that are impeding the improvement of teaching. This information clearly shows the futility of oversimplification and the easy choices among opposites that can only exist in distorted form.

The application of a synthesis of available information leads us to a new frame of reference which accepts as its basis the fact

that the arts are *creative manifestations* in the behavior of people. From this point of view, there evolves a series of operational problems for teachers to solve in their own ways and in their own schools.

The operational implications of these problems provide a definition of the role of the teacher who works with children through the arts.

## 9

# Improvement of Teaching

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THE role of art teachers and general elementary school teachers who help children work in the arts is to provide the optimum conditions under which children can participate in the creative process. These conditions define the characteristics of the situations in which children are able to act through the communicative language of the visual arts.

### *The Teaching Situation*

The definition of a working situation has five major components: (1) the particular community in which the school is located—the available facilities as well as the limitations; (2) the nature of the general program of education in process—the curriculum of the school; (3) the physical conditions in the classroom—space, furniture, equipment, and materials; (4) the children with their habits and attitudes derived from prior experience; and (5) the teacher whose responsibility it is to provide educational leadership.

Communities vary according to the facilities they can make available to their schools, but all of them possess characteristic resources that either are or can become available to their educational programs. For example, only some communities possess

the rich resources of an art museum, but all communities can provide libraries with collections of books, and reproductions in the form of prints and slides.

Similarly, all communities purchase art supplies for their schools, and they also have their own unique resources in the form of natural materials or industrial waste. Clay dug out of the river bank, scrap wood gathered at the lumber yard, scrap leather from a shoe factory, scrap rubber inner tubes from the corner filling station, reed and grasses from the field, dye from berries, copper scrap from the local tinsmith, the tail end of a roll of newsprint paper from the local publisher, and a multitude of other natural and waste materials can be collected and treated as art supplies.

All communities have parents and citizens who are interested in providing a sound democratic education for their children. Even when the parents and citizens in a particular community are troubled by the conflicting attitudes toward the arts in our culture, they are potentially capable of understanding the value of experience in the arts in the education of their children.

The curriculum in a school may assist or impede the development of creative experiences in the arts. Authoritarian curricula with their rigid allocation of small periods of time for the study of separate subject matter areas impede creative development because they do not encourage the interaction of children with the ideas they are being taught. Curricula that are based upon a clear frame of reference regarding the content of subject matter areas, the creative interaction of children with ideas, and the developmental growth of children encourage purposeful experience in the arts. The curriculum in a school is designed by the group of teachers and their administrator. They shape it according to their understandings, and they can change it when they create the ways to put available knowledge to work.

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impede the development of creative education. Rigid and unimaginative use of space and supplies that are available creates the same interference. Some flexible space and adequate quantities of expendable materials are essential for children to be able to work and learn through experience in the arts.

Much information is available about the kind of space, equipment, and materials necessary for sound education, and it is the responsibility of communities and their school officers to provide these essential tools for good teaching. An equal amount of information is available about the use of space and materials. To exploit these fully for their educational potentialities, teachers need to use them flexibly, inventively, and ingeniously.

Healthy children are inquisitive and resourceful. They enjoy involvement in purposeful activity, and they seek to establish their own imprint on the work they do. This is the positive way in which they assert themselves, the way they make known who they are. If their inquisitiveness and resourcefulness are not allowed to develop in constructive channels, they either withdraw into unhealthy inertia or they direct their energy into overtly negative behaviors.

Inquisitiveness, resourcefulness, inertia, and negative destructiveness are revealed by children in different ways. Such behaviors are a result of the ways in which children have been treated during their accumulated prior experiences. The specific forms these characteristics take are influenced by the developmental capacities of children. The natural inquisitiveness of an eight-year-old may be turned into destructive behavior when he is denied opportunities for free constructive activity. The natural resourcefulness of an adolescent may be transformed into serious inertia if he is bound by rigid controls and thwarted in his need to demonstrate his own effectiveness as a person.

Children come to a teacher with attitudes, habits, and patterns of behavior that have already been formed. These are either reinforced or modified according to the way the children are treated by their teacher.

A teacher is responsible for the educational development of children. His task is to accept them at their developmental and behavioral level and to help them grow to progressively higher levels. He performs this task by involving children in activity with various subject matter materials. To help children grow through experience in the arts, a teacher obviously needs to have had his own first-hand and personal experience in the arts.

If the personal experiences of teachers are limited to some superficial methods, they are without value. Children cannot become involved creatively in an area of experience unless their teachers have enjoyed such involvement themselves. To understand the satisfaction derived from the personal freedom and disciplined control in creative experience in the arts, teachers need to know these from their own experience. The quality of a teacher's experience, like the quality of a child's, does not stem only from the nature of the products he produces. Rather, it stems from both the process and the product through which it developed.

A teacher who knows the potentialities and the developmental characteristics of children and also the nature of the creative process can create the working conditions under which children can act through the communicative language of the visual arts. The schoolroom situation in which they work is hardly determined by the physical conditions alone, such as the characteristics of a school building, the availability of certain materials, or the nature of a particular community. Although these are highly important, they are often overshadowed by the conditions created by the nature of the particular school program and the conditions which the teacher develops in his own classroom. Physical conditions together with those created by teachers define the situations in which children or young adults are expected to act artistically, to act creatively.

It is obvious that the physical surroundings, the time schedule, and the curriculum current in a particular school do have limiting effects on the conduct of the art education program. But it should

be equally obvious that the teacher is the dynamic agent. The *way the teacher deals with these conditions* is as crucial to the program as the conditions themselves.

The development of values inherent in creative experience depends on the teaching conditions under which education through art is experienced by the students. Conditions created by the teacher, if contrary to the formative nature of the creative process, can destroy the potential values of artistic experience. Without sensitivity to the nature of artistic activity, art can be "taught" without fulfilling any of its potentialities for the education of children.

This suggests that the role performed by a teacher determines the quality of the educational experiences of children. The ways in which teachers exercise their role of authority and leadership define the value or lack of value of experience in the arts in the education of children.

### *Role of the Teacher*

The role of teachers who help children work in the arts is to utilize the available resources within a school community, to effect the school curriculum in a positive manner, and to manage the space, furniture, equipment, and materials in their schoolrooms in such ways as to provide the optimum conditions under which children can experience the arts. Teachers fulfill their educational leadership by arranging the social and physical conditions in such ways as to satisfy the developmental needs of children.

Although there are differences among the specific things that teachers do with children at different age levels, all good teachers accept their children at their own developmental levels. They seek to understand the interests and needs of children in terms of the children rather than in terms of unnatural and unrealistic expectations. They create the learning situations in their classrooms according to the way in which they understand and interpret the needs of the children.

When a learning situation has been well designed by a teacher, it is unified, coherent, and has aesthetic wholeness. The process of teaching and the teacher's role can be compared to the design process itself. Teachers so arrange the variety of elements in a school and classroom as to provide best for the educational needs of children.

In terms of the visual arts, a teacher fulfills his educational role through his concern with ideas that are either meaningful or potentially meaningful to his children. He helps them clarify their ideas, and he provides art materials that they can control sufficiently to communicate their ideas effectively. He helps children in satisfying their individual interests and in developing their unique capacities by manipulating time, equipment, and materials to best suit the activities in which they are engaged. To do this well, a teacher needs to distinguish three related factors in the artistic experience of children—ideas, materials, activities—in order best to develop and utilize their relationships.

Ideas are the starting points for action; they are an individual's purposes. Sometimes ideas are developed, to a considerable degree, in advance of the action, as, for example, through an elaborate mental image for a painting or a plan for a piece of furniture. But sometimes ideas are merely feelings of inquisitiveness or desires to try or test a material. Such ideas grow in purpose as exploratory action with materials begins to generate mental images.

Creative action with purposeful ideas is a mainspring which brings to light new aspects of the ideas and integrates them into the action process. It causes ideas to grow beyond the limits of the individual's original image or feeling.

An art material is the stuff upon which an individual acts. Through this action, the individual gives shape to his idea and realizes it with increasing clarity. The idea embodied in a material enables the individual to perceive new meanings in it.

Activities are the processes through which the individual interacts with his ideas and his materials. They are the dramatic stages

for action where individuals transform materials into meaningful shapes, thereby enlarging their ideas into integrated forms.

Ideas can be expressed in multiple ways; they can be acted upon through any of several media. A portrait can be developed in chalk, paint, clay, or it can be carved in wood. A bowl can be hammered in metal, carved in wood, or built of clay. Each material, however, gives a unique form and meaning to the idea. To be significant, activities need to develop out of purposeful ideas for action with materials. Without their source in purposeful ideas, activities degenerate into keeping busy with meaningless busy work.

A teacher fulfills his educational role by making it more, rather than less, possible for individual and small groups of children to explore their own ideas and to develop their own capacities to the fullest degree. A good working situation utilizes time and space for activity with art materials so that children can develop their personal ideas and share them with the rest of the group.

In such a situation, there are few rigidities concerning the use of time, choices of art media, selection of problems for work, and quantities of activities to be completed. The teacher recognizes that some children work faster than others; some are more excited about one material than another; and some have ideas to work on that require more time than others.

The children are encouraged to generate their own ideas and to develop them in terms of the visual media of the arts. Their activities are guided by their expanding purposeful interests and desires. In such a class, children are able to work individually or in groups, depending on the nature of the ideas being explored. The groupings are not arbitrarily imposed because they are permitted to form rather naturally.

Children working in such a situation learn to help each other. They gain experience in exercising and relying on their own judgments, and they become able to share the time and advice the teacher is able to offer. They learn to use their time effectively and to deal with materials efficiently.

In such a situation, a teacher has an active role to perform. He talks with children about their ideas and helps them expand their understanding by identifying themselves with significant aspects of these ideas. He arranges whatever storage space there is available so that the children can have access to the materials they need. He develops convenient physical arrangements so that children who are working with similar materials and ideas can be close to each other. They can then discuss their common problems and help each other to solutions.

Such a teacher provides materials that are both varied and workable. He knows that children need choices among drawing, painting and construction-design materials. He knows too that some materials in each of these categories are too rigid for children of certain age levels. Therefore he provides a sufficient variety of materials from which children can make appropriate selections.

Although it would be erroneous to assign certain materials to certain age levels, some rough classifications can be useful. These can help both as a starting point and a framework through which a teacher could clarify his conception of the educational role of art materials. If, however, any classification becomes a rigid yardstick, it impedes the artistic development of children. The keen interest of an individual child often enables him to handle a difficult material, and he should be allowed to do so.

For example, a seven-year-old youngster who attended an elementary school where there was a well-equipped art laboratory saw an older child throwing a pot on a ceramic wheel. In spite of the protestation of the teacher that the kick wheel would be difficult to manage, and that it would be easier for him to make a pinch pot or a coil vase, the boy persisted in his request to be permitted to try. He did. The walls of his pot were heavy and they were not entirely even in thickness, but he managed the clay well and raised the walls several inches in height.

All children are potentially able to work with materials such as drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, printing, construction,



and a multitude of design materials. For example, sculpture has possibilities for all age levels. Kindergarten and primary level children can work in clay; they can construct with boxes and boards. Intermediate level children not only work in clay, but they can also construct paper sculpture, build wire forms, and carve in soft wood or plaster. In addition to all these things, secondary school children can carve in stone or cement.

Primary children can print by arranging and transferring the impressions of scrap pieces of wood onto paper. They can cut inner tubes into shapes to use them as printing materials, and third graders can even cut and print linoleum blocks. Intermediate level children can design stencils, cut blocks, and make simple silk screens. Secondary school children can do drypoint etching in addition to the activities already mentioned.

Similar possibilities are available through the variety of painting, drawing, metal, enameling, weaving, design, and construction materials. The teacher fulfills an important part of his role by making available several different types of materials for children to use in expressing and communicating their different ideas and purposes.

The prior experience of the children and their developmental age level both serve as important bases for choosing ideas, materials, and activities. Although experience and developmental level are interdependent, each can be differentiated for the purposes of analysis of teaching.

A teacher fulfills a part of his role by helping children deal with ideas that are harmonious with their level of understanding and conceptual maturity. He fulfills another part of his role in helping them choose materials and activities that are harmonious with their background of experience in the visual arts and their general level of development. The prior experience of children with activity in the visual arts is as important a factor in choosing new activities as the normal age level expectations.

The curriculum structure in the elementary or secondary school is the context within which teachers help children work

in the arts. This provides the framework for the sources of ideas as well as the time blocks for work.

### *Improvement of Teaching in the Elementary Schools*

Elementary schools which are engaged in curriculum development to encourage active processes of learning are, at the same time, providing the most fertile ground for creative education through the arts. Creative experiences depend on the opportunities given to children to identify themselves with ideas. They are then able to act them out spontaneously and thoughtfully through the manipulation and organization of the materials of the arts. The improvement of teaching the arts in the elementary schools is as dependent on the general curriculum structure as it is on any other single factor.

Although the responsibilities for helping children in their art activities vary in individual school systems, the prevailing practices fall into the following five general patterns of operation: (1) classroom teachers conduct activities in the arts without the resourceful help and advice of trained art teachers; (2) art teachers follow an itinerant schedule of short and infrequent visits to all the classes in a school; they teach the arts without the consultation and advice of the classroom teacher concerning the current studies and interests of the children; (3) classroom teachers conduct activities in the arts with the help of an art consultant who acts as a resource person for the dual purposes of enhancing the art experiences of the children and of contributing to the inservice training of the elementary school teaching staff; (4) classroom teachers and art teachers both conduct activities in the arts by working together to contribute their special knowledge of the ideas, materials, and processes in the art activities that are underway; and (5) art teachers conduct the art activities plus some other study area such as language arts or social studies for a group of children.

Of these patterns, the first two mentioned are the least pro-

ductive in providing the opportunities for creative experiences for children, because: (a) classroom teachers are asked to teach the arts without adequate assistance, and (b) art teachers work outside the context of the stream of life in the classroom.

The third and fourth patterns are the most productive because classroom teachers together with their art consultant develop workable modes of operation that are suitable for their own school. These are well grounded in the ongoing experiences of particular groups of children.

The fifth is an effort by a few school systems to bring the arts into close relationship with at least one other area of the school program. To this extent, it operates successfully.

Because the first two patterns of operation divide the various learning experiences of children, they prevent them from flowing into a coherent stream of life and impede the development of creative living. Because the third and fourth patterns utilize the special and cooperative abilities of different members of a school staff, they lead to the improvement of teaching in all areas, including the arts. The fifth pattern achieves only partial success, but it does overcome some of the severe limitations of the first two.

Although considerable improvement has been made in the teaching of art and in curriculum development, it should be recognized that many children are as yet inadequately taught. Many elementary school children either have no opportunity for experience in the arts or are given instruction that is contrary to good teaching practices. This is a result of the fact that many schools do not yet provide adequate consultation assistance so that classroom teachers might be able to improve the quality of their teaching. The efforts of many art teachers are dissipated on infrequent itinerant schedules. They are assigned the thankless task of teaching children under poor conditions rather than applying their efforts to in-service training procedures for the gradual improvement of the capacities of the entire teaching staff.

Improvement in the teaching of elementary school children through the arts is as much a general curriculum problem as it is

an art problem. At this level, it is the cooperative concern of classroom and art teachers. In their work with children, they can improve teaching together to the degree that they can harmonize their special abilities for the purpose of serving the developmental needs of children.

Young children, when respected and encouraged, are naturally creative. Their creativity is more than the mere freshness and innocence that sophisticated adults often attribute to them. It is rather a concomitant of the process of growth and development. Physical and social growth is nurtured by creative exploration.

From birth, a child is involved in the parallel processes of exploratory discovery and expressive projection. His growing sense of self-awareness is the positive evidence of all he learns. As he grows, he discovers that he can do things with his hands, that the image in the mirror is his own, that he has the strength to project his purposes upon things and other people. All these are as thrilling to the child as they are to the adults who observe. His discovery of himself, and his growing realization of the relationships between himself and the people and things in his environment, generate a wellspring of creative energy. He is active. Through purposeful activity, the expanding relationships between himself and his environment are revealed to him.

Although these are natural tendencies, they can be assisted or impeded by curriculum structures and actions by teachers. If a developing child is denied opportunities for continuous purposeful activity his image of himself and the relationships he sees between himself and his environment become distorted.

Improved curriculum practices and improved teaching lead a child toward expanded insight and maturity. He is helped to realize himself in relation to other people like himself, and to his adult environment. Although individual children differ according to their abilities for discovery and expression, they differ too according to their past experiences—the guidance and care which have accompanied their growth.

Improved teaching takes into account the behaviors that have

developed in children through the course of their past experiences in order to challenge further growth to the limits of their capacities. It does not impose expectations which far exceed a child's own realizable purposes, because these would only suppress his creative energy. Unrealistic expectations force a child into severe overdependence upon approval and recognition. He then loses security in his own imaginative inventiveness, in his capacity to realize his own meaningful purposes in order to act upon them.

To satisfy the needs of children, it is often necessary to relieve them of external impositions to lead them toward purposes which are sensible for them and developmentally realizable. In education through the arts, this means that improved teaching focuses on the ideas that are significant to children. It also requires the availability of materials that children are able to manage fluidly and experimentally in order to build confidence in personal judgment. In essence, it means activity with ideas that are of concern to children in terms of materials that do not require a degree of skill and experience which is as yet unattainable for them. Such activity can be developed creatively.

Education through creative experience depends on a teacher's understanding and the provisions in a curriculum for the fundamental characteristics of the development of children. Young children from about four to seven years of age are inventive, imaginative explorers. They are eager to try and test their own influence on materials they find, and they create their own solutions to the problems they encounter. They even invent their own materials for expressive projection, and, given access to manipulative materials, they use them imaginatively and freely.

At this age, children use the media of the arts with ease and abandon. They will use them for purposes that are uniquely their own, consistent with their own points of view and harmonious with the developmental level of their conceptual understanding. Lowenfeld<sup>1</sup> has contributed greatly to our own understanding of

<sup>1</sup> Viktor Lowenfeld, *Creative and Mental Growth* (New York: The Macmillan Co.), 1952.

the symbolism in the artistic constructions of young children in terms of their unique attitudes and ideas.

The child from eight to about eleven is a challenge. Having been imposed upon, he seeks to emulate, imitate, and copy. His growing awareness of his own position among others of his own age and among the adults he knows makes him eager to belong and to be accepted. Clubs and gangs occupy much of his interest. He begins to grow aware of himself as a boy, and as an individual, distinctly different from a girl. He is boisterous, and, although he quarrels with ease, he demonstrates an expanding loyalty to his group, his gang. He learns to work cooperatively and to solve a common problem. He can develop a loyalty and an interest in a common undertaking.

A group undertaking in the quest of a creative solution to a problem is challenging to him. His effort may be personal, but the fact that it is related to the interests of the group often enhances its significance for him. We frequently find that activity requiring group participation to formulate the purpose and to carry out the execution of a task is a challenge. Activity involving the construction of parts in relation to a whole configuration is readily entered into with creative insight and confidence. Curiously, however, we also find that purely personal activity unrelated to the common good often elicits a stereotyped solution.

The continuous application of knowledge of the development of young children through experience in the arts leads to the construction of curriculum, the redefinition of the role of the teacher, and the improvement of teaching. The use of time, space, and equipment is then guided by the needs that children exhibit in relation to the teacher's purposes in educating for creative insight and behavior.

### *Improvement of Teaching in the Secondary Schools*

There is less variation in the patterns of operation in the teaching of art in the secondary schools than in the elementary schools.

Where the secondary schools do provide instruction in the arts, they are taught by specially trained art teachers. This would lead one to believe that the improvement of teaching of art should be simpler in the secondary schools, but this is far from true.

Secondary school children generally have only very limited opportunities to experience the arts. In the junior high schools, far less than half of the children participate in the arts and the vast majority of these terminate their contact after the seventh grade. In the senior high schools, only about ten percent of the children participate in art activities. Moreover, there are many junior and senior high schools that do not employ any art teachers, and they consequently do not offer any opportunities in the area.

On the whole, the secondary schools have made far less progress in the improvement of teaching in the arts than the elementary schools. Secondary school art education has continued to be more concerned with the teaching of specialized skills rather than with general curriculum improvement based upon information concerning the growth and development of adolescent children. Only in recent years has any widespread experimentation been put into operation. In most secondary schools, the arts are still being taught as isolated subject matter areas consisting of separate aspects of visual form. Only in relatively few places are the arts taught as meaningful expressive experiences through the construction of unified aesthetic forms.

An important reason for the limited participation of secondary school children in experience in the arts stems from negative cultural attitudes toward the arts. The result of this has been that many secondary school art programs are poorly conceived. Instruction is inadequate because it is mechanized rather than personalized. Consequently, too many of these programs do not attract the number of children they should. They are not a vital part of the life of the school. Their offerings are limited because they follow rigid problem sequences which are not attractive to

boys and girls. The real needs of students for personal fulfillment are not satisfied.

When the arts are taught in relation to the developmental needs of adolescent children, activities in the arts are enjoyed because they are experienced to advantage. As a twelve-year-old child progresses toward adolescence, he grows more preoccupied with himself. He becomes seriously concerned with his relationships to others in his group. The emergence of unknown physical and social changes that he feels produces anxieties within him. His special interests and particular abilities become apparent. He grows eager to excel in some area of activity in order to earn the recognition and approval of his peers. To experience the arts creatively, he needs access to a variety of art media in order to choose the ones through which he can express his own ideas and so find personal security and self worth.

Pre-adolescent and adolescent children interact with their peers and with the adults in their environment. They realize themselves as they project their actions creatively. The adventure of pre-adolescents, the ecstasy, anguish, and romance of adolescents are all sources of creative action. Creativity, however, emerges in relation to the situation and the circumstances under which a group of children are encouraged to operate. When the atmosphere is charged with understanding, purpose, sympathy, respect, and challenge, the creativeness of inner feelings can emerge with security and self-awareness.

Sympathetic conditions are important for the healthy development of children of all age levels. Their growth during their formative years leaves a lasting mark on their later behavior. Older children, with their growing awareness of themselves and the social values imposed upon them, demand the most sympathetic understanding to encourage their secure participation in creative invention.

The conditions created by a teacher in which social interaction occurs are as potent a force toward creative action as the developmental characteristics of the children themselves. In fact, the



developmental capacities of children can grow to their optimal level only when the educational situation encourages their growth.

The potential devotion and intense interests of adolescent children can be tapped for meaningful experience in the arts when their interests and ideas are accepted as the basis for work. When they achieve the security of knowing that their ideas are respected, they win the freedom to act creatively and inventively. When they can participate in the planning of their own activities they welcome advice and criticism. Progressive development to higher levels of refinement and closer integration of the aesthetic organization of their ideas in visual form is a highly satisfying challenge to them.

The improvement of teaching in the secondary schools can come about through the departure from rigid predetermined sequences of academic problems. When ideas are alive and meaningful, adolescent children seek the necessary discipline to control their materials for effective expression.

To improve their teaching, secondary school art teachers need to find the means to provide varieties of two- and three-dimensional materials. They need to find their own ways to manage their classrooms so that children can select their materials and set their own pace for work. If the primary purpose of art education is the creative involvement of children in the arts, it is far more important for a child to become truly involved than for him to complete a given number of projects.

Improved teaching that respects the integrity and ability of the boys and girls frees the teacher of many mechanical burdens. By allowing children to move at their own pace, a teacher has more time to talk to children about the things that matter. He can help them explore their ideas, and he is better able to encourage them to widen their horizons and hence intensify their awareness.

The teaching of art in the secondary schools can be improved through sensitive concern with the role of materials in the crea-

tive process. They are the media through which an individual's ideas interact and develop. They need to be resilient enough for the particular individual to work effectively. The fact that so many children have had only limited or interrupted experiences in the arts makes it imperative that a secondary school art laboratory have available a range of materials in each of the major categories. The teacher can then help the children select materials that are sufficiently responsive to their experiential level of development. Their energy can then be applied to the problems of creative organization rather than to the mechanical management of materials that are too rigid for them to use.

The improvement of teaching in the secondary schools depends partially on the provision of more flexible and varied materials. Basically it depends on the action of art teachers. They provide the structure of the program, and they can modify it. They can create the atmosphere that can make the art laboratory a haven for personal development and self-fulfillment. The teaching of art will then fulfill its promise in the education of secondary school children.

### *Conclusion*

Teaching children through experience in the arts can be improved by applying information about aesthetic form and aesthetic experience in terms of their implications for social-psychological development in our culture. A synthesis of this information in the context of the operational problems of teaching provides a foundation for art education.

Such a foundation emphasizes the need to build a creative type of education so that personal freedom and spontaneity can be nourished and developed in organic relationship with disciplined control and social responsibility. The organic relationship among spontaneity, creative insight, and disciplined control produces intensified awareness.

developmental capacities of children can grow to their optimal level only when the educational situation encourages their growth.

The potential devotion and intense interests of adolescent children can be tapped for meaningful experience in the arts when their interests and ideas are accepted as the basis for work. When they achieve the security of knowing that their ideas are respected, they win the freedom to act creatively and inventively. When they can participate in the planning of their own activities they welcome advice and criticism. Progressive development to higher levels of refinement and closer integration of the aesthetic organization of their ideas in visual form is a highly satisfying challenge to them.

The improvement of teaching in the secondary schools can come about through the departure from rigid predetermined sequences of academic problems. When ideas are alive and meaningful, adolescent children seek the necessary discipline to control their materials for effective expression.

To improve their teaching, secondary school art teachers need to find the means to provide varieties of two- and three-dimensional materials. They need to find their own ways to manage their classrooms so that children can select their materials and set their own pace for work. If the primary purpose of art education is the creative involvement of children in the arts, it is far more important for a child to become truly involved than for him to complete a given number of projects.

Improved teaching that respects the integrity and ability of the boys and girls frees the teacher of many mechanical burdens. By allowing children to move at their own pace, a teacher has more time to talk to children about the things that matter. He can help them explore their ideas, and he is better able to encourage them to widen their horizons and hence intensify their awareness.

The teaching of art in the secondary schools can be improved through sensitive concern with the role of materials in the crea-

tive process. They are the media through which an individual's ideas interact and develop. They need to be resilient enough for the particular individual to work effectively. The fact that so many children have had only limited or interrupted experiences in the arts makes it imperative that a secondary school art laboratory have available a range of materials in each of the major categories. The teacher can then help the children select materials that are sufficiently responsive to their experiential level of development. Their energy can then be applied to the problems of creative organization rather than to the mechanical management of materials that are too rigid for them to use.

The improvement of teaching in the secondary schools depends partially on the provision of more flexible and varied materials. Basically it depends on the action of art teachers. They provide the structure of the program, and they can modify it. They can create the atmosphere that can make the art laboratory a haven for personal development and self-fulfillment. The teaching of art will then fulfill its promise in the education of secondary school children.

This point of view leads to the following propositions to form the basis for the experimental improvement of teaching:

- (1) that creative experience, although intensified in the arts, is present in many other areas of human behavior;
- (2) that creative action through the arts provides a way of forming experiences which is basic to the organic growth of the human personality;
- (3) that creative experience functions to form particular aspects of an individual's ideas, feelings, and attitudes so that they become an integral part of the whole stream of his living;
- (4) that the function of education through the arts is to provide opportunities for creative experience to sensitize children to ways in which they can compose an increasing range of their experience into aesthetic and organic form;
- (5) that the role of the teacher is to create the conditions under which youth can come to grips with the ideas and feelings they want and need to embody in organic form;
- (6) that such involvement, within the intensity for feeling-and-forming which creative experience encourages, leads to a more generalized outcome than that related to the arts as such, since it sensitizes the student to a discipline which can be used to form many other experiences in life, particularly those having to do with value fulfillment.

Expanded insight into the significance of artistic experience in the lives of people can focus the growing attention of teachers on the general education of children. It can help teachers lead children into the essence of creative experience in the arts.

The operational problems of teaching children through the arts are at once general and specific. The general aspects of the problems are continuously clarified through the persistent application of our growing synthesis of knowledge. The specific aspects must be answered by each individual teacher in his own situation and in terms of his own group of children. The general

aspects provide the basis for **fundamental** judgment; they also provide an approach to the specific day-to-day teaching operations. Together they enable a teacher to create the means for the arts to function as *meaningful creative experiences* in the lives of children.

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